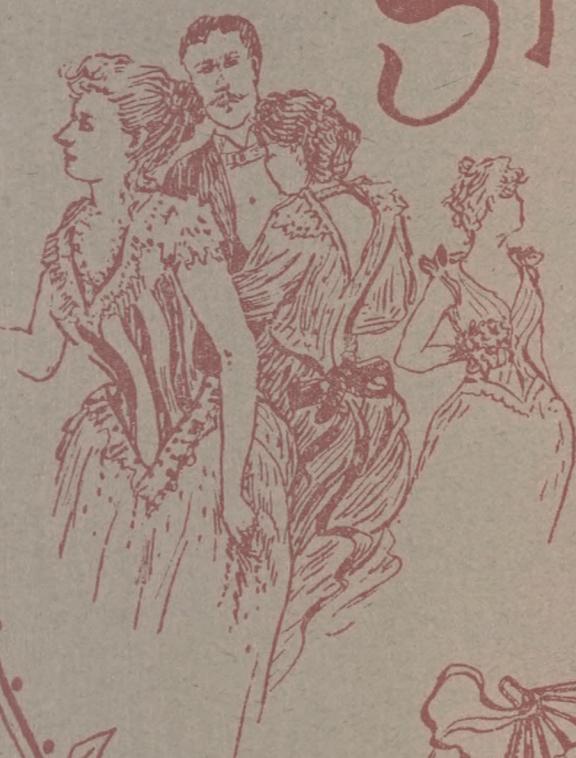


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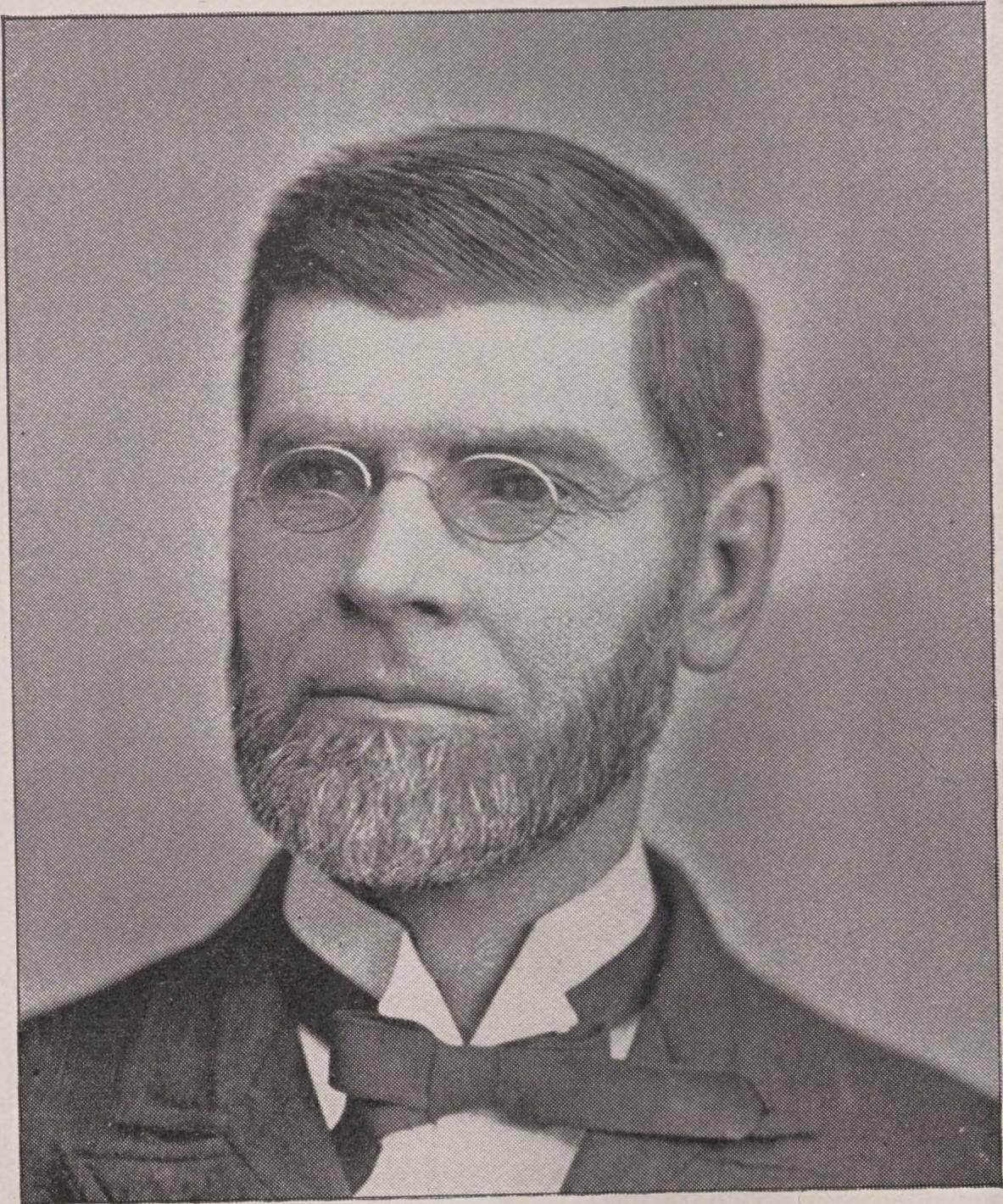
STOLEN STEPS

By

S. L. PIERCE
Author of
"DI"



J. B. Philadelphia
Lippincott Compy



G.L. Pierce

STOLEN STEPS

A STORY

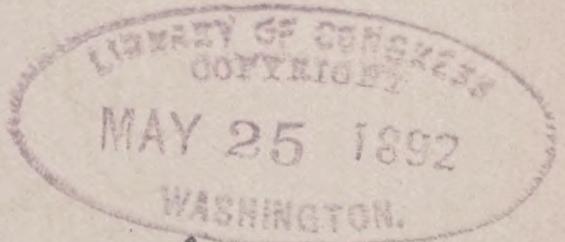
BY

SQUIER L. PIERCE

AUTHOR OF "DI"

"I am not worthy of the wealth I owe;
Nor dare I say, 'tis mine; and yet it is;
But, like a timorous thief, most fain would steal
What law does vouch mine own."

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.



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STOLEN STEPS.

CHAPTER I.

RICHLAND COTTAGE.

"Toot!" shrilly shrieked the locomotive whistle of the Manitoba train. "Wyzetta!" droned the brakeman. Within five minutes the train was again speeding on its westward way, laden with its freight of humanity, while scores of men, women, and children, who had been deposited at the station, went aboard the little steamer, on Lake Minnetonka, that had awaited the arrival of the train.

"What a change!" exclaimed Miss Grace Putnam to her companion, Mr. Henry Hardwick, as they stood on the deck of the steamer that now, with pompous puffs from the pipe of its engine, moved from the pier. "Talk about Forest Park at home! Did you ever breathe such refreshing air as this? Isn't this perfectly splendid?"

"Perhaps," answered her companion, "your long ride up the Mississippi Valley, in the confining cars, unfitted you to judge impartially of the merits of Minnetonka. The change is certainly agreeable, but it hardly becomes a citizen of St. Louis to speak lightly

of Forest Park, which, as every one in our city knows, is next to the largest one in the United States."

"Oh, Mr. Hardwick, if we could only take this lake home with us and put it down by Forest Park, wouldn't we beat all creation?"

"I am afraid not, Miss Enthusiast; in fact, we would gain little, unless we could take with us the atmosphere of this place as well as the lake. The Minneapolitan will tell you that, putting the lake and the atmosphere of the place together, nature has furnished the twin cities a park surpassing in salubrity and beauty anything to be found on the globe. When you come to know the people of the twin cities, you will find it necessary to make considerable allowance for shrinkage in what they say, for their vocabulary contains adjectives only in the superlative degree of comparison."

"Well, since we can't transport it to the South, we must give thanks for the river and railroads that can transport us to this delightful place for a summer outing. See that love of a cottage nestling among the trees over there.

"What a lot of sail-boats. They don't seem to be short of wind in this country. Wouldn't it be splendid to sail in one of them such a day as this? They just fly over the water. What a splendid view? The forest on the shores, the blue sky and the blue waters seem gradually to merge into one, forming a vista into which our boat is steaming. What beautiful, cozy cottages these are along the shore among the green trees! What a contrast between them and the straggling, ungainly caricatures of dwellings along the roads in Missouri!"

"Still disparaging your own State," answered Hardwick. "These cottages are mostly the summer homes of the well-to-do people of the twin cities, who glory in embellishing them. The houses you noticed along the lines of the roads in Missouri are the tenements occupied by renters of the land, who have no inducement to improve or beautify, for it would only be for the benefit of the landlords, and with them they have no sympathy."

"How the wind sweeps round that high, projecting point," said the young lady, and she drew her wrap about her shoulders. "It almost takes my breath."

"That," said the captain, attracted by her remark, "is Breezy Point. Beyond it—you can just make it out from here—is Richland Point. It is the property and summer home of a St. Louis lawyer, who has retired from practice."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the delighted girl. "Richland Point! But I don't see the cottage; it is said he has the most picturesque one on the lake."

"So he has," answered the captain. "Take this glass and look."

"Oh, how beautiful! I do not mean the house only, but the landscape. I can hardly distinguish the cottage from the forest that seems to infold it in its skirts. Take the glass, Mr. Hardwick, and tell me if you ever set your eyes on a prospect more charming! That is where we want to stop, captain, if you please. Now it is in full sight. What splendid trees!"

"Yes," responded the captain, admiring the transported maiden more than the Richland Point prospect, "trees are Richland's special hobby. His entire three-

hundred-acre tract is a fine maple forest. He has cleared them off in front of the cottage, as you see, leaving the ones with most abundant branches for shade and ornament. Notice the green lawn extending upward from the margin of the lake, to what he persists in calling his ‘cottage,’ but which is really a magnificent château. Notice, too, that the cottage has no glaring, distracting colors. It so harmonizes with the surroundings that I have heard persons of fanciful turn of mind say it almost looks as though nature, in one of her playful moods, had set a copy in the art of human architecture for the human architect and landscapist to follow.”

“And there are the blessed inhabitants of this charming realm of the beautiful!” cried Grace, as she discovered Mr. and Mrs. Richland passing leisurely down the sylvan walk to the landing. With a graceful curve the gangway of the boat passed alongside the rustic wharf, and, with the elastic spring of a nymph, Grace leaped upon it, exclaiming, as she was clasped in the welcoming arms of Mrs. Richland, “It is all a mistake.”

“You have the advantage of us, Grace,” said Hardwick, who had now landed. “You possibly understand the trend of your thoughts, but to us they savor of mental disorder. Try and get down to the earth, which you once more tread after the short, but to you intoxicating, voyage from Wyzetta to Richland Point.”

“How dreadfully unappreciative you are, Mr. Hardwick! Don’t you realize that we are in Eden, and that the story of the expulsion and the cherubim, armed with their flaming swords, which turned every

way, is a delusion and a mistake? This is the veritable Eden, and these are its undisturbed inhabitants."

"I think I understand your case," said Mrs. Richland. "You have been so long shut up in the city, and become so habituated to the artificiality of city life, that the adornments with which nature plumes herself seem strange and unearthly, when in fact, to one educated to appreciate nature in its primitive belongings, the earth is found to be a charming abode for man, and remains the same paradise it was in the pre-adamic age. God made the country, man the city; but this is no time for this style of talk. You will find, Mr. Hardwick, that Minnetonka produces a ravenous appetite, and that the climate develops adequate digestive powers. Judging from your rather emaciated appearance, I suspect you have not enjoyed the luxury of feeling hungry for many a day. Our ruralistic life is what you and hundreds and millions of our cramped, overworked denizens of the city are in need of more than anything else. Come along and join us in our mid-day lunch."

"Dear Mrs. Richland, you have been too realistic for my state of mind. I fear you have plucked the feathers from my beautiful bird of Paradise, and transformed it into a stuffed fowl, to be roasted, carved, and eaten," said Grace, as she proceeded with the company towards the cottage.

"Well, my dear dreamer," said Mrs. Richland, "real poetry has its root in the palate. One who has no taste for the food he eats is not possessed of a brain in normal, working order. The flower of poetry cannot bloom in perfection when the plant is stunted through lack of nutriment. Your bird of Paradise is

a myth, while your stuffed fowl is a palatable reality which your poet, if not unfitted for his vocation, will relish. Some things are too matter-of-fact to be appropriate themes for the poet, but, in the way of conducing to peace, happiness, and enjoyment, they surpass in importance all the poet has ever sung or artist depicted on canvas. One of these matter-of-fact things is an appetite for food, coupled with sound digestive organs and a good conscience."

"You have struck the key-note, Mrs. Richland," said Hardwick, gravely.

"Then I have a near neighbor, Mr. Hardwick," said Richland, "that I want you to get acquainted with. She eats with a relish that would seem incredible in view of the quantity consumed daily, and her digestion is so perfect that, immediately after eating, she sinks into a slumber so deep that even dreams would knock in vain for admission to her serene mind. As for her conscience, I don't believe she ever had an unpleasant thought in her life. Mrs. Richland, at your earliest convenience, pray introduce Mr. Hardwick to Miss Dawson."

"Really," said Grace, "such a person must be a rare being."

"Very," responded Mrs. Richland, with a hearty laugh. "He is guying you. Miss Dawson is our porkine occupant of the pigsty."

Grace laughed, and in her laughter there was something to remind one of the gurgling of the brook rippling singly over pebbles.

"Dear Mr. Richland," she exclaimed, "you have in the person of Miss Dawson a fitting type of some very

pretentious persons of my acquaintance at home. You have drawn aside Mrs. Richland's too matter-of-fact curtain that shuts from view the blue heaven where fancy and imagination love to linger, and on airy nothings feast with a relish and enjoyment that must be exquisite, if we are to judge by the samples they have sublimated into the form of poems and stories for the delectation of the millions. It is true this kind of food is without nutriment for the people of your Miss Dawson order, but it is the very kind required for the development of imagination, without which we are like a ship becalmed at sea. A hundred thanks, Mr. Richland, for your service ; you are my champion."

"And here," exclaimed the old gentleman, drawing his arm about her waist, "is one of the cherubs that has flitted into my paradise to tempt me to pluck of the forbidden fruit that blushes so invitingly on her beautiful cheeks," saying which he accepted the proffered kiss with the gallantry of a knight of the olden days.

"Mrs. Richland," said the girl, with a mischievous, bantering glance in the face of the last speaker, "I envy you ; and you must not get unreasonably jealous if I fall dreadfully in love with your husband. I shall try and obtain one for myself of like youthful heart and mature understanding. I find men are like the peach,—most delicious when ripe."

Richland gave Hardwick a knowing wink, the exact purport of which Grace at once realized, and was only the more beautiful for the blush it produced.

"Flatterer," said Mrs. Richland, "let us descend from the realm of the fanciful to that of the substantial." They had reached the cottage, and found back

of it, under a maple's friendly shade, a table spread with an inviting lunch. "All be seated," said the hostess.

At this moment there was heard the merry voices of the two daughters and a grandson of Mr. Richland as they approached by a forest path. Gay they were and joyous as the birds in the trees.

As they sat at lunch, in the conversation Mrs. Richland said, "Yes, Miss Putnam, this is truly a lovable summer retreat; but you must not imagine that any of us are edenized anywhere on this restless planet. Some flowerets of Eden may indeed remain, but nothing is more certain than that 'the trail of the serpent is over them all.' Our business, my dear, is to gather and enjoy the beauty and perfume of the flowers; but it is well to have a prudent lookout for the serpent that may be coiled in unsuspected places, and avoid the venom of its fangs."

"Could you enjoy the retirement of a place like this?" inquired Richland of Hardwick.

"Possibly I might accustom myself to it," was the response; "but, candidly, with me the completest rest is when I forget myself in the engrossment of business."

"I understand that, Mr. Hardwick; it is the unfortunate forgetfulness that is sometimes known to end in the collapse of the brain. You know our old mercantile friend, Smith, forgot himself that way, and that now his widow has his splendid tomb to visit and adorn with floral offerings."

A smile that seemed nearly related to a sigh was the only response.

Late in the afternoon the young ladies and little Howard, the grandson, strolled into the forest. In their random rambles they finally emerged from the wood at a point where an inlet of the lake appeared. There they discovered Mr. Hardwick seated in the stern of a boat that was chained to the shore. So absorbed was he in his own musings that he failed to see or hear the approaching strollers till the child was aboard the rocking craft with its lone occupant. Grace, too, found a seat at the prow, while the two Richland girls perched themselves on a seat near by.

"See the fishes!" exclaimed little Howard, as he looked into the transparent waters.

"How contented and restful they appear," said Grace. "I have often wondered whether they have a language and can communicate with each other, and whether there are any relations of special friendship among the finny inhabitants of the waters."

"There!" cried Howard; "there comes a big one out of the deep water; isn't he a beauty?"

"Yes," replied Hardwick, "those big ones are bright, noble fellows; but they are scaly creatures, and dangerous company for these little innocents to fall in with. See!"

"The naughty old thing! to gobble up the little one that way!" cried the boy. "That tiny little fish was some one's baby, too; but, then, I don't suppose its mamma knows or cares anything about it; and I'm sure that's a good thing for its mamma; for, if I should get gobbled up that way, Jeewhilikins! wouldn't my mamma take on!"

The girls laughed at the odd conceit of the child,

while the man, apparently reminded of some unpleasant incident in his experience by this childish sally, observed, "Come, Grace, the sun is getting low, and we must join our friends at the hotel."

Returning to the cottage to take leave of their entertainers, Grace and Hardwick proceeded from there along the winding, sylvan way through the forest to the Hotel St. Louis, less than a mile distant.

CHAPTER II.

ALVIN SMITH.

FROM her earliest remembrance Grace had been on the most intimate terms with Henry Hardwick. He was more than twenty years her senior. She had long noticed that to her father he was not only devoted but indispensable. Serious and reserved, he had never failed to have pleasant and loving words for her. His influence drew him to her so forcibly that she looked for his return, when called away on business, with all the solicitude a child feels for a parent. Now that she had bloomed into womanhood, she continued to revere and love him, while, on his part, he seemed unconscious of affection for any of the fair sex save this devoted girl, who seemed to him, apparently, only the child of earlier days. He seldom spoke of himself, and such was his dignified reserve, that not even his most intimate associates felt free to ask him any questions concerning the experiences of his early life.

It was decidedly a new departure on his part, when he temporarily abandoned business and joined with a few acquaintances in a summer outing at the Northern lake, where we now find him, seated in a private parlor of the Hotel St. Louis, with Grace, on the evening of the day after the visit at Richland Cottage.

Grace was reading the Minnetonka items in the *Minneapolis Tribune*. "Here," she said, showing him a paragraph, "you see that even in the distant Northwest your journeyings are chronicled." She read: "Among the arrivals at the Hotel St. Louis we notice that of Henry Hardwick, the successful and opulent capitalist of St. Louis. Mr. Hardwick is still in the prime of life, and looks as though he could tackle the business problems of this iron age with the energy and ability of a Napoleon. Few men have attained a more enviable position."

Laying down the paper, the young lady with mock enthusiasm clapped her delicate hands.

"Please don't do that, Grace. While we may pardon the obsequious reporter for pandering where thrift may follow fawning, who is ever ready to laud the fortunate and kick the scaffolding from under the victim of mistake or disaster, you know how utterly hollow all these words of praise are. Enviable position, indeed! The world prostrates itself at the feet of wealth. When it falls on its knees in the worship of an all-merciful God with half the ardor it bows before Mammon, it will have made a tremendous stride upward and onward."

Taking the girl's hand and looking fondly at its symmetrical structure, he continued: "This delicate hand of my little girl is not strong enough to grapple the rough, heavy rocks that, by our own folly or inadvertence, or by rival contestants for the world's imaginary prizes, are caused to obstruct our progress, and which one must get out of one's way in order to succeed. The work and time required to remove these obstruc-

tions, and the devotion of our body and soul to the work which competition exacts as a condition of success, strengthens the hand and the intellect, but hardens and sears the heart, so that while the world may praise, it cannot restore the loss of the boon,—capacity to enjoy. In my estimation, Grace, you are wealthier in the possession of this innocent, soft, clear-veined hand than is the possessor of millions of accumulated gold who has lost this boon."

It was with such indescribable sadness Mr. Hardwick uttered these words that Grace was moved to tears. To Hardwick these tears seemed to drop as from a cloud he had inadvertently caused to mantle her brow, and he continued : "I am unfortunate, indeed, in causing useless clouds to exclude the one ray of sunshine with which your innocent, cheerful face illumines my own wasted life. I went beyond myself. I would have you ever bright and happy. We must avoid extremes. This hand is too delicate ; it lacks vigor. The oar upon the boat and the breeze upon the lake must be familiarized. We are here for enjoyment. In my case it is a novel employment. Success depends upon your co-operation. Follow my direction, and when you return to the city your father will not recognize in my nut-brown maid the pale-faced daughter he sent away. Good-night and happy dreams."

With the good-night kiss she ever awarded him, he took his leave. Grace retired to her couch, and, just sufficiently exhausted by the exercises of the day to relish rest, was soon in the embrace of sleep, "tired Nature's sweet restorer."

The sun was above the horizon when she again be-

came conscious of existence. When one awakes, one discovers that the stream of thought is flowing ; whether this stream ever rests is not known. On this occasion, Mr. Hardwick was the theme. "Why,"—it was thus the stream flowed in the unseen channel of her consciousness,—“why is the good soul so severely hard on himself? He seems to fancy his heart is seared by long contact with worldly business. He does himself the greatest injustice. Business has neither hardened his heart nor his sensibilities. I wonder why he does not marry? Then I would have to give him up. God have mercy! How could I do that? But I love him so well that I would even make that sacrifice, if it would make the dear misanthrope happy. A wife of the right kind would sweeten his life. On my word, that is just the thing. Now, if the dear old fellow only knew what foolish thoughts I am this blessed moment thinking, wouldn't he relax that solemn face of his and have a real laugh at my expense. Could I give him up? Never : I do love him so dearly. I am a goose; perhaps I am a swan, and my dying song will be in the celebration of his nuptials.”

She was now sitting up in bed. Thus she sat and still she mused : “Why does he fondle and seem to so much fancy poor me? Is it because he thinks I am still a child, and is not conscious that I am now more than twenty-two? Twenty-two! Yes, almost twenty-three. Mercy: how dreadfully old I am becoming.” As she sat in her white night-dress on the side of the bed she looked in the mirror on the opposite side of the room, but failed to detect any evidences in her face of the ravages of age. She continued : “Well, if he wants me,

I shall not object,—after all, I do not know about that.” She put on her hose and shoes. “I am a goose, and no mistake.” She sat a minute or two longer in meditation, when she rose and went to the glass. Carefully she unwrapped the rolls into which her hair had been done up; she combed and adjusted the soft raven tresses; then she repaired to the washstand and performed her morning ablution. Lastly, she put on her light, woollen dress, that fitted her form so perfectly that the form remained the feature of beauty rather than the adornment of dress; an important consideration when one is fortunate enough to possess a form more beautiful than the most finished costume. She sallied forth from her room an undeniable human morning-glory. That, at least, was the impromptu decision of a young gentleman who had arrived from St. Louis during the night, Mr. Alvin Smith.

Alvin Smith was the book-keeper for the business firm of which Hardwick and Grace’s father were members. The maiden, who had been indulging in the reveries so interesting of which Hardwick had been the chief theme, could not satisfactorily account for the decided thrill of satisfaction she experienced on meeting the admiring look of this young man.

Alvin’s face was pale, the result of continued close confinement and overwork. When Grace visited her father at his office, not long before leaving the city, she had been startled by his colorless but bright face, and had suggested to Mr. Hardwick that Smith needed an outing. She had formed his acquaintance years before in the public school, and had always admired his independent, manly deportment. She had noticed that

as a student he always seemed earnest, and, in the occasional remarks made by him during class recitations, that his mind was clear and comprehensive. In our public schools we have the nearest approximation of all classes to an equality. Here credit is accorded to the one who merits it, and the son of the washer-woman is the peer of the daughter of the banker and the merchant. This is the democracy in which the roots of our American republic gather the nutrition that supplies the trunk and branches with appropriate material for the development of healthy tissue.

The straitened circumstances of his widowed mother had, in the early childhood of Alvin Smith, compelled her to resort to the most menial employment for the support of herself and child. The young man remembered—not without a pang of loving regret—the old days when she had been obliged to take in washing for this purpose; he could also remember the cheery song with which she sometimes enlivened her work when he was present.

She had possessed the happy faculty of teaching the youth to walk. In this few parents succeed, especially in the city. Her self-sacrifices in his behalf had been abundantly rewarded. When her son received his diploma in the high-school, and afterwards in a business college, he was still a boy in years, but a man in solidity and reliability of character. The godlike spirit of the mother who bore him still held him, a willing subject, in its all-embracing love. Oh, the majesty of motherhood ! Happy was the youth when he was able to retire this devoted parent to a home in a suburban cottage, and support her comfortably with his earnings.

But Alvin failed to find happiness or contentment in this home. The goad, ambition, pricked him constantly. Besides, he felt an oppressive sense of the artificial barriers which isolated him from what, in his ignorance, he considered the higher circles of society ; as if there could be a higher one than that of which his mother and himself constituted the sole and exclusive members.

The sense of this isolation was perhaps the result of being once more in the immediate atmosphere, but not in the social circle, of the young school-girl he had associated with and still mutely loved. Little did he know how in those school-days the eyes of that same school-girl stole coy, bashful glances at him. Little we know of the currents and counter-currents in the unfathomable deep of the maiden's mind.

Another gentleman also observed Grace with keen interest as she stepped onto the veranda that delightful morning. It was her cousin, Thomas Putnam, who had accompanied the excursion party from St. Louis. He was also the only child of a widowed mother ; but the similarity extended no further. Thomas Putnam was at least thirty, and all that was required to constitute him a man of the world and a welcome member of society he possessed in superabundance, if we except the important quality of congeniality. Of commanding stature, his form was well-proportioned, and his dress of that artistic quality his experienced tailor knew would show off his splendid physique at the best. His gait was easy and graceful, and his face was really beautiful in feature ; not delicate like that of a woman, but strong and masculine.

The student of human nature would have seen in the expression of the girl, when she greeted Mr. Putnam, a spirit of toleration rather than that of actual liking for her relative. The same student would have read in his face and manner a spirit of admiration and affection for Grace, subordinated to a more engrossing admiration of his own immaculate self.

The easy manner with which Grace conversed with Putnam and other gentlemen of her social circle, and the slight attention she appeared to bestow on him, touched Smith sensibly; for it was his misfortune to have a keen, sensitive spirit, capable of extreme suffering and of exalted enjoyment.

The presence of Alvin was a surprise to Grace, for she had no expectation of his coming. Highly as she respected him, she, by that unaccountable psychological sense that enables sympathetic souls to commune, independent of the material faculties, shared his feelings. She felt restrained, by the galling chain of social despotism, from yielding to her impulse to recognize and greet him with the pleasure she really felt at seeing him so unexpectedly. To the young man this enforced restraint had all the appearance of cold indifference. Having no reason to expect different treatment, he had no reason to feel resentment; but in matters of the heart reason is dumb. At least it sometimes looks that way. When people grow old, they look back contemplatively on this emotion we call love, and debate in their minds whether love is anything more than a mere fantastic sentiment; whether all this gush about love, which composes the bulk of fiction, has any other basis than the freaks of imagination. With the young such

questions are out of order, and blessed be the god, Cupid, that they are.

Beautiful and novel as were the surroundings and scenery, Alvin spent the day in lonely and unpleasing reflections on the social world that separated him from happiness. This girl was the inspiration of his dreams ; she was the one bright, particular star in the constellation of his heaven. "And now, alas !" he said to himself, as he wandered listlessly in the evening, "she is as cold and unapproachable as yonder orbs in the robe of night." He felt that he was at least entitled to notice. The manner of his reception in the morning and total neglect during the day, in view of the old school-day familiarity, was magnified into a disposition to snub him as one beneath her notice. A sense of this chilled him more by far than the cold night wind blowing in from the dashing lake. The tossing of the lake was a symbol of his own perturbed spirit. He was in the road where it emerged from the forest near the hotel. He failed to see the girl where she had paused in the shadow of the gloomy wood.

"Mr. Smith!"

Had the heavens indeed stooped, and the glorious being he hopelessly adored been yielded up to his yearning soul ? No longer felt he the chilling breeze from the troubled lake.

For the moment Alvin forgot the barrier as he stood with Grace in the shadow of the forest. He exclaimed with a fervor that the girl could not misinterpret,—

"You, Miss Putnam!"

The mere words were simple enough, and it was a marvel to Grace how the utterance of them could be so

unmistakably a revelation to her of that greatest and grandest of all objects,—a human heart pulsating with pure, true love. Nor was the fact displeasing to her. By the light of that heart she obtained for an instant an introspection of her own.

But there was a sudden revulsion in the feeling of the proud-spirited young man. The ugly fact suddenly flashed in his mind that Grace had in the morning shown him the cold shoulder, and that when he should next meet her in the company of her society friends, the ungracious act would be repeated. This was but an accidental meeting: the barrier arose in all its galling hardness, and behind it the loved one disappeared.

His words grew cold and formal, and Grace pursued her steps alone to the hotel. While she felt hurt, she could not conceal from herself the fact of the revelation, and she was not lacking in acumen to discover the cause of the sudden suppression of the feeling that prompted his first utterance.

As Alvin watched the retreating form of Miss Putnam, he felt ashamed of himself. He had been unjust. If the arbitrary and galling restraints of society operated upon her, was she responsible for their existence? Had she not just shown a willingness to do her part in opening a way of escape from a thraldom hardly less inimical to her own natural feeling than it was to his? He recalled the tone in which she had spoken his name. It was too charming and tender to have been the false note of an unfeeling heart.

He could but keenly feel that he had forfeited her esteem by conduct that amounted to actual incivility. "After all," he very sensibly said to himself, "why

should I complain or put on airs? What have I ever done or said to awaken in her mind the remotest idea that her father's book-keeper is weak enough to be in love with her?" He actually laughed at the presumption and forgetfulness of the fact that he was to her as any one of the thousands of young men who must admire, but had no reason to expect her to favor them in the avowal of their regard or affection, if it existed. He resolved to renounce his Quixotic fancies and exercise his common sense.

But the youngster was mistaken in his conclusions. Grace had learned much of his history. Hardwick had told her how the mother of this hard-working, ambitious young book-keeper had been accustomed to do his washing, and how the little boy used to carry his clothes to him, done up in the most perfect order; what an obliging, prepossessing fellow he was even then, and what an interest he had felt for him and his mother on that account.

When Grace entered her room that evening and took up a magazine to read an interesting story she had commenced, she failed to find the interest she had formerly felt in the personages. Her thoughts were on that young man who had actually repelled her kindly efforts to be social with him. Her eyes might scan the letters and words of the story, but the current of her mind was agitated with another theme, and it was all-engrossing. "This is a new experience," so she mused. "I am used to being courted and flattered by the dashing fellows of society, who are only too glad to catch at a word of encouragement; but this young gentleman, without any credentials that Madam Grundy would tolerate, pre-

sumes to lord it over me as though he were a born prince. He expects to be coddled by others, as no doubt he is by his mother to the full extent of her capacity,—well, his mother has not coddled the fellow for nothing; that must be confessed. I really admire his independence. I like him, and can but think that sometime he will be able not only to hold up his head with that innate manly dignity, but that the Madam Grundys of society will feel honored when he bends sufficiently to give them a recognition. That's Mr. Hardwick; I would know his step anywhere.” Putting a wrap around her shoulders, she went onto the veranda, and like a spirit of love and comfort glided up to the side of that sombre-hearted individual, and had taken his arm before he realized her presence.

“This is kind of you, my dear,” he said, with that gentleness with which he always addressed her. “I have a letter for you, which, with my usual care, I have carried all day in my side-pocket. Your father sent it by the book-keeper, who gave it to me this morning.”

“Gave it to you?”

“Why should he not give it to me, pray? Am I not a safe repository?”

“Of course you are, Mr. Inquisitor; but please let me have the letter. I am so anxious to hear from poor, lonesome papa.”

Hastily returning to her room, she read the letter, which was in part as follows:

“DARLING DAUGHTER,—It was a strange whim on the part of Mr. Hardwick to request me to send one of the ledgers and other account-books, together with Smith, so that he could go over

them with the book-keeper and straighten out some matters that are somewhat mixed. That is a strange way for Hardwick to take an outing. He really needs rest, but this does not seem to be the way to get it. I shall miss Smith greatly. The fellow is my right hand ; but then this is not a busy season of the year, so I can spare him ; and it may be all for the best. You know the maxim, ‘All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.’ Try to encourage Hardwick to rest. He has been a hard worker always, but why he still continues to work so, when he has no one to leave his large fortune to, is beyond my comprehension.

“YOUR FATHER.”

As Grace closed the letter, Hardwick entered. Looking quizzingly in his face, she said, “Up here to work, are you ? Sent for the books and book-keeper. Mr. Hardwick, I protest !”

“I too,” was the laconic reply. “We will put our work off, and go in with all our might for recreation. Please be ready early to-morrow morning for a row on the lake.”

“With whom ?”

“With me.”

“But you are not an oarsman.”

“We will take Smith along ; he is a master at the oar, and heaven knows what he is not master of ? I may conclude to try my hand at the trolling-hook, and you probably know the bass are early risers, and generally make their breakfast before people of our degenerate days are up. We must try to be with them before they get their breakfast.”

CHAPTER III.

FISHING.

"THIS is awful nice," exclaimed Grace, as she sat in the prow of the boat facing the oarsman, Mr. Smith, and the *pro tem.* fisherman, Mr. Hardwick, seated in the stern, trolling-line in hand.

"I see nothing 'awful' about it," said Hardwick, while he critically but admiringly eyed the fair young lady.

"Mr. Hardwick, you are cruel," she retorted, with a pretty pout. "Strike that little word 'awful' from my vernacular, and you would well-nigh deprive me of speech. Why, sir, I do believe, if you had your way, you would have the inhumanity to exclude the pet pug from 'My Lady's boudoir.'"

The sun had just issued from his gold-curtained pavilion in the Orient and extended his happy good-morning greeting to the awakening forest and lake. From the wooded amphitheatral shore there stole a fragrance so delicious and delicate that one might fancy it was emitted by the heaven-scented robe of the regnant queen of summer, who had chosen this enchanting, forest-girded lake for her retreat during her brief reign in the beautiful Northland.

Though in his lively fancy Alvin had, times without number, conjured the form of the girl now so

bewitchingly facing him from her perch in the prow of the boat, and had felt no embarrassment in the presence of the apparition, he found her actual presence in that attitude abashed him, and felt an awkward inability at first to adjust himself to the novel and delightful situation ; for it was delightful, no matter how embarrassing.

As the boat sped over the water, Hardwick was all attention to his trolling-line. "This," said he, "is not my way of fishing : I prefer the old-fashioned hook and line. One holding the fishing-rod can *feel* what the fish are doing. Nothing is so agreeable as the sensation of a good 'bite,' but this I find is a matter-of-fact, monotonous business of—— Hold on, Smith ! I do believe I've got one ! Sure as you live, I have!"

Drawing in his line excitedly, Hardwick was delighted to find on his hook a plump and very lively bass. More were taken in rapid succession, and, as the boat approached Richland Point Landing, Grace noticed a gradual relaxation of Mr. Hardwick's care-worn features, as he took in fish after fish with the enthusiasm of a Walton. It seemed to her that his face, emerging for the time from the shadow that habitually clouded it, was of rare brightness, disclosing an expression of happy abandon that must have been characteristic before some untold shock had supplanted it with the sad, stern look that now nearly always appeared. She thought to herself, " Could only that natural, happy expression be continued, what a fascinating man he would be."

While Smith entered fully into the excitement of the occasion, he could not abstain from making the face of the young lady in the prow of the boat a study.

When he noticed with what interest she, on her part, studied the face of Hardwick as he took in the fishes, he would have given a great deal to have been able to fish out some of the thoughts that were disporting themselves in the current of her mind.

As they approached the landing, the voice of little Howard Wilmot was heard above the murmur of the lake, "Mr. Hardwick, mamma has come!"

"That is good news, my boy. Now, Grace, we will pull up, and my word for it, Mrs. Wilmot will take our fish and have them dressed and served in a style no French cook can beat." Gallantly he helped her from the boat, and Smith saw, with anything but pleasure, a mutual look that told only too plainly that the bass were not the only game for which Hardwick had been playing his line. "They love each other," he mused to himself; and though he had only the day before resolved to relinquish the vain dream that had so long haunted him, the resolution was forgotten. He was madly jealous, and neither forest, lake, nor anything on earth could please him now. In vain Grace tried to rally him as she stood by his side at the landing. She could not forget the revelation he had made in the impromptu utterance, under the shadow of the forest, on the previous evening.

"Bless the boy!" said Hardwick, as little Howard assisted him in gathering up the fishes in the boat; "your mamma will be just the person to do justice to these beauties when she gets them in her kitchen, won't she, little Trot?"

"You bet!"

"Hut tut! young man. Your mamma did not get

here any too soon, if that is the slang talk you have been learning. Come along ; we must find her." Off he darted with the boy and the fishes, leaving Grace to the tender mercy of Smith.

" Why didn't she go with him ?" mused the young man.

" Why is he so specially anxious to see that widow ?" mused the maiden.

" What is the next thing on *our* programme, Mr. Smith ?"

The atmosphere grew sensibly warmer.

" To tell the truth, Miss Putnam, while it may not be to my credit to say it, this rowing, to which I have not for some time been accustomed, has really tired me out, and just now the most agreeable act would be one of repose."

As he spoke, Smith pointed to a rustic seat under a maple. " Charming," was the response. " After labor rest is sweet."

Seated beside the divinity of his adoration, Smith felt a sensation quite new and agreeable. As they looked around and took in the delightful landscape, something of its witchery glowed in the countenance of the fair enchantress who had charmed the young man into forgetfulness of all things, except the bliss of the situation in which he was, at least for the time, placed. His conversation was unconstrained, and was of that old school-day familiarity that she remembered with such pleasure.

His isolated and studious life had rendered him thoughtful. He was original, and therefore entertaining to one who was capable of understanding subjects out-

side of the threadbare topics that make up the stock out of which the pretentious but shallow mimics of the flippant conversationalists of society draw their meagre supplies. Such persons would have voted Smith a bore. All things bore them that involve the necessity of thinking, that they may understand what is said.

Had Alvin possessed the literal power of inspecting the thoughts and fancies that were idealized in the current of the mind of the girl then at his side, he would have been moved with wonder, and led to institute a critical inquiry into himself to ascertain what it could be that so greatly magnified his merits as they were seen through her eyes. Perhaps he would have been led to inspect more minutely the fancies and feelings that animated that mysterious current of her mind, and made the discovery that love was the lens through which those tender eyes looked upon him ; for love is a powerful lens, and so transparent is it that the person affected fails to realize its existence, and indulges in the fond delusion that the person it magnifies is seen with the naked, normal eye. Blessed the lover who fails to discover this illusion after the idealities of blissful courtship have been superseded by the trying realities of matrimonial life.

It is wonderful how soon young people of the opposite sex and of congenial disposition pass the border of conventionality, and converse with a confidence and freedom that would shock Mrs. Grundy.

"It was real good of Mr. Hardwick to give you a chance to escape the confining duties of the hot city, and come up here and recuperate," said Grace.

"He has a big heart, Miss Putnam. In him the

stern granite of hard business enterprise is veined with the pliable, virgin gold of unostentatious charity and kindness. In the struggle of business competition he is the granite rock, but with his subordinates he is a veritable father."

"Do you know, Mr. Smith, he has always seemed like a father to me. I am truly glad he has impressed you with the same feeling. Papa writes that he wanted him to send those dreadful account-books by you, so that he and you can go over them together. Such work must be awful wearisome and wearing."

"It is not the work, Miss Putnam, but the place that plays the mischief. The high stone and brick walls and the stone pavements of the city not only exclude the healthy earth but the pure atmosphere, and in its place we have a bake-oven, filled with hot, impure air, in which we are obliged to spend our time during the dog-days. Nothing but the iron constitution of the race enables people to survive such exposure. Little work will be required here, where any amount might be performed without hurting one. To me this seems like a new world. I can even fancy it is what Paradise was before man became a ravenous, insatiable beast bent on destroying all of Nature's grand, beautiful works, in the production of which millions of years were required, in order that he—this inflated bubble on the stream of time—may be able to say, 'I am possessed of property estimated to be worth in dollars one hundred thousand,' or, perchance on rare occasions, he may be able to say, 'I am worth a round million.'"

"Just a little too cynical, Mr. Smith, in your allu-

sion to gold-getters ; but your ideas of this place are identical with mine, and even your reference to Paradise was anticipated by your humble servant, for when I saw Mr. and Mrs. Richland walking in the tranquil shadows of these lovely maples, and everything around them so rural and inviting, and heard the birds, apparently without fear, carolling in the boughs of the trees, I could but recall the Garden of Eden and its primitive inhabitants. What a shame it is that, while nature woos the denizens of the city to enchanting retreats like this, so few have the ability to yield to the charmer and enjoy her smiles and comforts. It seems to me the city is the hot-house where all things are forced and abnormal, and where art has developed tastes and occupations so unnatural and exacting that real enjoyment is impossible. How delightful it would be to restore the country home and country atmosphere to the millions who swelter in the cities during the summer."

"Your ideas are the fruitful theme of philanthropists," answered Alvin. "The massing of millions of people in the modern city is but a phase in the progress of our race to better the conditions of life. In this country, in particular, the vast surplus of wealth is directed to the improvement of transportation and to the betterment of the condition of the masses. Science has taken hold of the sewers and ventilators, of the tenement-house and water-supply, and has so wonderfully improved the condition of the dwellers in cities that the percentage of mortality is now vastly greater in the country than in the city. Electricity has come to the aid of man in furnishing motive-power for

transportation ; and we have reason to believe that your suggestion of country life to the persons doing business or working in the city will be realized by extending cheap and rapid transportation to the country. I confess I was too cynical in my allusion to money-getters, for some of them have been public benefactors. Such a man is our own venerable citizen, who has established that most beautiful Botanic Garden in St. Louis, which will transmit his name to posterity.”

Thus, from matters of gravest interest to the flimsy sweet nothings that coy, dainty love feeds upon, Alvin and the maiden, mindless of time, passed the morning in blissful unconsciousness of the existence of other persons than themselves. True, they talked of persons, places, and things, but in a way that presented them as mere abstractions. They were at last aroused to cognition of other real persons by the appearance of Hardwick, Mrs. Wilmot, and her little boy. On introducing Alvin to the widow, Hardwick said,—

“ We are indebted to him for the enjoyment of the morning boating, and, if you are put to extra trouble on account of the fish, he is responsible, for I assure you that without Smith we would have been without bass.”

“ The *responsible* party, Mrs. Wilmot, is Mr. Hardwick. To him I am indebted for this rare privilege of enjoying companionship with Nature in her most beautiful and attractive appearance.”

“ I suspect,” said the widow, with an arch smile, “ Dame Nature made the inanimate attractions of the place mere decorations of the animate creation, in the person of one of those Graces that transform the in-

animate landscape, by their presence, into something of themselves, which is altogether prepossessing and companionable—to a young man."

This she said as she approached the girl, who had risen, and impressed on her lips a kiss so manifestly expressive of genuine affection that Alvin at once endorsed her judgment and fine taste. It was, however, the extremity of exasperation when he was subjected to the ordeal of seeing Hardwick, with the most perfect nonchalance, follow the example of the widow.

CHAPTER IV.

SCIENTISTS.

IT was noon, and all repaired to the cottage except the widow, who excused herself as she sought the kitchen in the rear. Her maid of the Emerald Isle had already completed the work of preparing the substantial lunch that was spread in the genial shade of an adjacent maple.

Mr. Richland was out when the parties entered the spacious, cool cottage parlors, but he entered soon after, with the jocular remark that he found his hired help more entertaining than his papers and books. Mrs. Wilmot entered also, cool and fresh as the morning, with no fret or worry of the kitchen in her genial face, as she announced lunch.

"We must wait for the help," said her father, authoritatively.

"Oh, papa," remonstrated the widow. "Could you not for this once give up your dreadfully disagreeable principle of equality, and let the 'help' wait till our guests are served?"

"Daughter, you astonish me. Did you ever know me to yield a principle to gratify the demands of a depraved taste? They are our equals. It is all cant to talk about the dignity of labor, while in our social circle we ignore the existence of the laborer. When America

relegated George III. and his minions to the old world of consuming standing armies and hereditary nobility, she crowned her humblest citizen, and proclaimed the nobility of man. The laborer, no less than the employer, is of this royal house, destined to rule himself, and by this simple rule dominate and rule the world."

"Did you tell them, papa, that we have company?"

"Of course not; the laborer is not to be shunned because of his garb. It is his badge of honor."

While Mr. Richland was distracting and astonishing his company with this communistic harangue, a clatter of merry voices was heard outside, and presently two of the comeliest damsels entered that ever distracted the heart of man. They were each clad in coarse but neatly-fitting gowns; soft leather gloves ornamented their hands, while their heads were surmounted with broad-brimmed chip hats. The visitors could readily see they were subject to no constraint in entering, while the graceful movements and manner of these maidens in woolsey dresses and chip hats told of culture and refinement.

Smith had seen little of the country, and nothing of the wild Northwest, and he was wonderfully impressed with the strikingly-intelligent faces and graceful forms and manners of these daughters of toil. The elder of the twain particularly interested him. She was rather above the medium height, and there was something in her open, bright, winsome face that was more charming than mere physical beauty, while physical beauty was by no means lacking, but in her case this was a matter of second importance; it was the enchanting spirit that found expression in her sky-blue eyes that so riveted his attention to this marvellous wild-flower of the for-

est, so he hardly noticed her younger sister, who could not have been more than seventeen.

In the persons of these working-girls Grace and Hardwick were astonished to recognize the daughters of their host. With a humorous smile he introduced them to Smith, and as the elder girl recognized the young man, there was the slightest blush perceptible in her blonde face, for she did not fail to catch his admiring eye. The "blind boy" had shot one of his delicate arrows ; so very delicate was it that if it really entered any heart it made no wound. It rested there as if it had grown in the place as the nerves grow and become a part of it. Such an arrow can no more be plucked out than can be the nerves of that vital organ. Sweet, lovely maiden, if indeed this arrow has lodged in thy unconscious heart, what a reckless act on the part of the mischief-making archer ! How can thy love ever be requited by one already in the very delirium of madness, caused by another arrow from the quiver of this apparently omnipresent disturber of human hearts ?

After the "help" had retired and made a hasty toilet, the party adjourned to the lunch-table under the maple. At the table, the elder of the two sisters last introduced to the reader was seated by Mrs. Wilmot, while Smith and Grace sat opposite them. Smith could but note a striking resemblance in the faces of these two sisters, and at the same time a marked individuality in each. When in repose their faces were so white as to be almost colorless, but in neither was there a paleness produced by ill-health. The wavy, heavy hair of the widow was dark-auburn, while that of Josephine was so light that, with eyes of the azure

hue of the cloudless morn, she was a pronounced blonde. In their faces was a slight suggestion of the rich, warm blood that pulsed beneath the marble-like exterior, and imparted a delicate floridity when they were animated by conversation.

The widow's lips were full, with just enough protrusion of the under one to betray a marvellous richness of color, as if ripe and ready for the warm kiss of love. Unnoted are the garnered jewels gathered in the happy past of those women who, in the bright morning of promise, are doomed to put on the weeds of widowhood. How often does the bloom and beauty that glorifies their after-life owe perpetuity to the unseen currents in the shrine of memory that lave the heart.

More than once, as they sat at the table, Grace, with uneasy glance, perceived that Alvin was decidedly charmed by the blue-eyed maiden he faced; and she was more than ever impressed with the conviction that the heart of Hardwick was enmeshed by the auburn locks of the widow of the rose-tinted lip.

And this was what the inquisitive Alvin might have seen in the current of the mind of the fair young lady at his side, had he possessed the requisite faculty: "I am the foot-ball of fickle fortune. Mrs. Wilmot would make a fitting wife; she is more suited in every way than I am, except, perhaps, in the matter of love. In that, my heart tells me, none are my superiors. I love him so well that it will make me happy to have him recover from that distress that saddens his life. I think Mrs. Wilmot has already succeeded in restoring him. She is a sweet woman, and I don't know how he can help loving her. Smith? Bah! I am indeed a

goose. "What is he to me, or I to him?" In a minor key a response forced itself to her consciousness: "Everything." It was so decisive that it startled her, and with a tinge of jealousy she marked the spell that for the time entranced the young man aforesaid. She felt a repugnance for young ladies with heaven-tinted eyes, but could not deny the potency of such a person. She even regretted that her own eyes were not of like exquisite color and power. Quite unconscious was the simple-hearted Smith of the havoc he was making. He marked only the growing charms of Josephine, nor dreamed that he was himself the central sun round which two hearts were for the time revolving, and that, if Josephine looked unusually bright and fascinating, it was in a measure the result of the illumining power of this dominating sun.

"Mr. Richland," said Hardwick, as he picked a bone from a tempting morsel of fish, "you said, a little while ago, that it was your rule to have the 'help' with you at table. You have illustrated your consistency by having two of these indispensable members of society here; but, I think, I am not mistaken when I say there is a third, in the form of a comely, fine-formed lady of Irish and, doubtless, noble pedigree, whose dainty fingers manipulated the knife that dressed these delicious fish. Why are the *two* called, and not the *third*?"

"My province extends not to the kitchen," answered the host. "That you should ask the question, evinces a painful ignorance of the laws governing 'domestic relations.'" Taking a second cut of fish, he continued, changing the subject, "This bass is fine, and no mistake. I think there is no better meat when it is prop-

erly cooked fresh from the cool northern waters, especially when the cook is Mrs. Richland's prime minister," and he inclined his head gracefully in the direction of the superb widow.

"I want to know more about this new departure of yours, Mr. Richland," said Grace. "Mrs. Wilmot is not only a beautiful and graceful pillar upon which the economy of the kitchen may repose, but one whose efforts are manifested in such a way as to give us all enjoyment who partake of her viands at this time. What, pray, is the service to which you have devoted these two younger daughters?"

"They are my wood-choppers."

"I don't understand," answered Grace.

"Doubtless not. You see they are devoted scientists. First it was geology. Many hammers have they ruined in the breaking of stone; but, as in their wandering in the out-of-door life physical vigor was acquired along with scientific knowledge, I did not regret the loss of the hammers. They next took to botany: for miles around you will find the mutilated flowers and plants, victims of their heartless investigations. From flowers they took to trees, and with the idea of studying the structure of my maples, they have taken a contract to chop them down and work them up into cord-wood, for which I am to pay them one hundred dollars per cord. The groves were not only God's 'first temples;' they have ever been the veil woven by God to shield the face of the earth from the heat of the sun and preserve moisture. The clouds are their children. Woe to the people whose short-sighted policy destroys these beneficent parents. The just recompense will be a desert

land. The glorious maples of Richland Point encumber several hundred acres of valuable agricultural land. Should I consult the usual greed of this destroying age, I would transform them into firewood and sell them for nearly as much as the land originally cost me, and the land would be worth more for agricultural purposes than it would sell for now. I felt that these young ladies would be safe to intrust with the axe. In the interest of science I was willing to sacrifice a few maples. When I made the contract, I did not think the draft on my bank account would be serious, but if they keep on as they have begun, heaven knows how I will fare."

"Good for the girls," exclaimed Grace. "I should like to 'go snacks' with them. The idea of a lady chopping cord-wood! Why, it would be the ruin of even a novel-writer to suggest such a possibility."

"Go in, Grace," said Hardwick; "if Mr. Richland is willing to risk the destruction of his entire forest, I am willing to subscribe one-third of the stock to meet expenses."

"Won't that be jolly!" exclaimed Ruth, the younger sister.

"All right," said Richland; "but take special notice; there is to be no sub-contracting. The work must be done by yourselves; but while it is going on, I will agree to board Grace the same as the rest of my help."

"Mrs. Richland," said Hardwick, "Josephine and Ruth have been presented to us as delvers in the hearts of rocks and trees in the pursuit of knowledge; but it seems to me the presiding genius of your kitchen,

designated your ‘prime minister,’ is entitled to consideration; for what is the science of plant structure to that of man structure? Your kitchen is the laboratory and shop in which the worker produces the material of which this wonderful human structure is physically composed, and with which the waste constantly going on is replaced. The science of preparing human food is most important of all, because on good digestion and assimilation of appropriate food depends a healthy liver, and the healthy or unhealthy liver may be the means of making the possessor a saint or a sinner. Your cook is the wielder of the destiny of the world. She is the nurse, not of the child and invalid alone, but of all who subsist. In the education of these daughters of yours, Mr. Richland, you will have miserably failed if you do not place them under the tutelage of Mrs. Wilmot. Reformation in the kitchen is imperatively required. It is there the bulk of the substance of the earth is ignorantly wasted, and the health of mankind destroyed.”

“An eloquent advocate of my cause,” responded Mrs. Wilmot, with an approving smile.

“The sentiments of the speaker are sound to the core,” gravely remarked the host. “With all consideration for her mother, I must say that when our daughter, Mrs. Wilmot, came home, some three years ago, to live with us, I was suffering with dyspepsia, and Mrs. Richland was in such ill-health that she was unable to look after the servants. Mrs. Wilmot took in the situation, and mother was glad enough to turn matters over to her. At that time there was a general state of insubordination among the servants.”

“With mother’s leave,” said Mrs. Wilmot, “I re-

paired to the kitchen, and instructed the cook how I wanted her to make some bread. With arms akimbo, she gave me a contemptuous look, and with the air of a queen exclaimed, ‘I want you to know, ma’am, that I’ve been tached once how to make bread, and I a’n’t goin’ to be tached agin.’ ‘Very well,’ said I; ‘pack up your kit and go where you are wanted.’ In a towering rage, she called on mother for a ‘character,’ and mother referred her to me. When she returned to the kitchen and found me with apron on and sleeves rolled up and at work, she stood and watched me in silence. Saying nothing, she finally turned and went out; but I saw her lips quivering. I followed her to her room, feeling like a criminal myself. I knocked at her door; but there was no response. Finally, I opened it. There she sat on a trunk, a photograph before her, and tears in her eyes. Her appearance was so forlorn and heart-broken that I was overcome myself. I felt that she was worth winning over to my side. I think she read my mind, for, as she wiped the great tears from her eyes with her apron, she sobbed, ‘Indade, ma’am, it isn’t a character I am afther deservin’ at all, at all, afther the way I talked to the likes o’ you.’ ‘You shall have the character, if you want it,’ said I, feeling something like tears in my eyes. ‘What is your name?’ I asked. ‘Abigail Hamilton,’ she answered; ‘and sure it’s a name I wouldn’t for the world disgrace.’ Abigail is my name, and this fact drew the girl to me. ‘Is that a photograph of your brother?’ I asked. By the crimsoning of her face I knew it was not the photograph of a brother. ‘Where does he live?’ I asked. ‘Sure, and it’s in the auld counthry, bless its swate falds.’ ‘When you want your character, Abby,’ I said, ‘let me

know ; you and I will go to work and show the folks from cellar to garret what can be done when mistress and maid are friends.' 'The Holy Mother of God be your friend !' she exclaimed, grasping my hand. ' You may tach me all you want, for it's jist the likes o' you that can do it.' From that day to this she has been the most willing soul that ever lived.' "

Smith had been an interested listener ; but while his eyes were on Mrs. Wilmot during the narration of her story, he all the time saw Josephine. With an earnestness of which he was quite unconscious, his eyes were directly on her when he quoted the words of Portia, at the close of the interesting narrative, "So shines a good deed in a naughty world."

His manners and expression so impressed her that she could not rid herself of the effect. That night he was in her mind when she sank to sleep, and in her dream there appeared to her a young man identical in form, feature, and manner with Smith. She saw him writing a sonnet "To Josephine"; she looked over his shoulder as he wrote, and line after line, sparkling with the richest gems of poesy, of which her name was the burden, appeared upon the page. When she awakened, she was still able to recall the words of the sonnet. She wondered at the strange circumstance, when she remembered that she could not have written a single couplet. She asked herself the startling question, "Who wrote the sonnet?" for sonnet it was, with rhyme and rhythm as complete as poet's art could make it. In the morning there was an abstractedness in her manner that led her mother to remark, "I am afraid the girls are carrying their freak of wood-chopping too far. Josephine don't look as well as I could wish."

CHAPTER V.

ELYSIUM—DREAM SONNET.

AFTER lunch, Alvin was conducted by Richland to his library, where the two spent a good portion of the afternoon. Richland had brought to the place quite a number of volumes pertaining to the philosophical consideration of law and government, which were in line with the course of reading Alvin had been engaged in, when he had leisure, for the previous two or three years. Speaking on the subject to Mr. Richland, he said, "I have no notion of ever practising law, but I have an idea that no one is fit to do business or discharge his duties of citizenship who is ignorant of the general principles of law and government."

"You are right, Mr. Smith. Nothing is more contracting and destructive of one's capacity to look at things with a clear and comprehensive understanding than the exclusive pursuit of one's business, be it law, medicine, theology, trade, or science; such a person wears himself into a rut, so that his line of vision becomes circumscribed, and if he continues long enough in this exclusive employment, he sinks out of sight of the objects of public interest which are not in the immediate rut into which he has worked himself. Specialists may successfully restore sight by removing a cataract, but they cannot frame a statute that will meet the

requirements of the age in restraining railroad discrimination. Edison may invent a phonograph, but he cannot devise a system of intercourse between the capitalist and the laborer by which mutual good-will will take the place of the alienation wrought by the innovating hand of the inventor of labor-saving machinery."

Richland found in Smith a bright, modest, exceedingly well-informed young man, and as in the progress of conversation theme after theme was called out, he discovered to his satisfaction that he had found "a foeman worthy of his steel;" one who could grasp and handle the various subjects proposed with a high degree of intelligence and acumen.

The afternoon was spent in conversation and reading, and they were surprised to learn, when the young ladies broke in upon them, that the day was so far spent. The young ladies asked Smith to join with them in a stroll, but before leaving the library Josephine put both arms round the neck of the old gentleman, who bent his delighted eyes upon her, and impressed a kiss on the fair, peachy cheek she turned to him for that purpose. Smith wondered if a more lovely picture of beauty and devotion existed in the universe.

After our visitors had supped at the hospitable board of Mrs. Richland, Mr. Hardwick, with a quiet, business expression, said,—

"Smith, the hard work of the day must have been so exhaustive that I would be imposing on you were I to add the burden of my weight to that of Grace in the boat with which you are to return in charge of that young lady. Mrs. Wilmot has kindly tendered me a

seat in her phaeton, and, as you see, she is ready to take me in charge.” As he spoke, the amiable widow came out apparelled for the drive, and the vehicle was driven up. As the two entered it the setting sun cast his golden rays on their faces, and Grace noticed, with a queer mingling of pleasure and regret, that the face of Hardwick glowed with a sense of enjoyment she had never before observed to so completely possess him.

“Heaven be thanked for widows,” mused Alvin, as he bent his steps with Grace and the entire Richland family—minus the widow—to the landing. There, shaking him heartily by the hand, Richland said, “I confess to you, Mr. Smith, that I am not able to rise to the required height of ideality to enjoy this retirement, in which Nature plays all the parts and leaves me little to do but look on. I prefer a companion to converse with on subjects that are usually tabooed. I find you in sympathy with me, and I wish you to come over and make this your home while you remain at the lake.”

There is something radically wrong about a young man when he fails to appreciate with pleasure the enjoyment he could confer on old people. The single day Smith had spent with Mr. Richland had enabled him to find in him one of those rare specimens of humanity who, through all the struggles of competition in business and the drudgery of a long professional life, had retained a sunny heart.

“Thank you,” he responded, with feeling. “If it be in my power in the slightest degree to add to your enjoyment, I shall be glad to do so; for the entertainment you have given me to-day has been so out of

the routine of my life that I can hardly realize my identity."

"I can vouch for your identity," said Grace, with a bewitching smile, already on her perch in the stern of the boat.

It was high time for the truant to be recalled to this divinity, for it must be confessed there was a counter-charm in those wonderful eyes of Josephine that did not impress Grace pleasurabley.

When Smith took the oars and got his boat well under way, and was alone on the waves with Grace, he wondered that he could be so weak and fickle as to have for a moment preferred Josephine to this lovely being on her rocking perch in front of him, holding the helm. How the waves rollicked with the evening wind. How the boat joined in the sport as it tossed and pitched on their swelling crests. After a little while the wind and the wave sank into sleep, and the harvest moon and myriad stars tremulously begemmed the placid couch of waters on which they slumbered.

The forest bordering the lake held each leaflet in reverent silence, while ministering Night baptized it afresh with the life-giving dew of heaven.

It was the witching hour of young Love's dream, and the two in the boat sat in silent musing. The oars rested in Alvin's hands, refusing to disturb the stillness of the enchanting hour. "How," 'twas thus the young man mused, "how could I have been for a moment drawn from this central luminary of my universe? Josephine may charm, but Grace is light and warmth to my soul. The tides of my being ebb and flow at her sweet will. Will the time ever come when she will

consent to sit at the helm of my life-bark? It is a delicious dream. When I awaken she will have passed from my existence. No; that cannot be. No one can ever divest me of the memory of this enchanting dream, if dream it must be, and only that." So in the sweet thrall of love he communed with himself. The maiden ceased to be a creature of clay. She was an ethereal being nestling with his own rapt spirit in the Paradise of Love. He was himself a dual being. Bodily, he resumed the oars; but the spirit continued to bask in the sunshine and warmth of this affinity which had transported him to elysium. If he conversed, the words came without volition, and he could never recall them. There was between them a converse in which the lips played no part, and in which silence was eloquence.

There is an undefinable power of one fine, strong mental organism over another when no counter-influence prevails. Such a power Alvin exercised over Grace on this occasion. While she was his senior by at least a year, she was his junior in all that constituted maturity of mind and soul. She had been reared in affluence and devotedly served, so that self-effort had never developed her faculties as it had developed those of the washerwoman's son. In his isolation his companionship had been with himself. Self-development had been his ambition. In character he was not unlike the landscape, as it appeared at that hour on the silent, still waters of the lake, which mirrored the star-robed dome of heaven; the real and the imaginary combined to infuse his mind with the poetry as well as the prose of existence. Experience and disappointment had not

sobered his fancy nor veiled the prophetic eye of hope. Grace saw in him the budding promise of the highest manhood, and admired and—was it only a fancy in the thought that she loved him? But she thought she loved Hardwick, too; and now she loved Alvin, and him only; she thought of no one else, cared for no one else. Her delighted spirit rose on the wings that bore up his own, and while she sat and talked with him, the spirit of each in congenial sympathy hovered over the elysium that youth and inexperience conjure into existence, but in which, alas, human feet never tread.

That night, when Alvin retired to rest, he was still so under the intoxication of the sweet hours on the lake with Grace that it was long before he could sleep; still the vision of the loved one was before him, rocked in the tossing boat or reposing in tranquil peace; and in her transparent spirit he saw mirrored his own heaven no less clearly than he saw the starry dome of night mirrored in the bosom of the unruffled lake. Fancy succeeded fancy, melting anon into dreams. Again the boat rocked and tossed. But a change came o'er the spirit of his dream. The waves swelled into heaving billows, and when he looked for the charming face of Grace at the stern of the boat, she was no longer there, but in her place sat Josephine. Firmly she grasped the helm and held the boat in position, to safely ride the great waves that beat and surged about them. Hard he pulled at the oars, and swift and safely sped the bark. The excitement and exertion awakened him. So vivid was the dream that the vision of Josephine, heroically holding the helm and guiding the storm-tossed boat, haunted him as something real. He

sighed with remorse when he reflected that, even in dreams, this acquaintance of a day should replace the girl he had adored for years.

Again he slept and dreamed. He was this time alone in his mother's cottage by the southern river. Josephine was by his side. Grace was there too, but Josephine stood between. Hand-in-hand they left him, laughing merrily at his perplexity. Josephine returned alone, and as he looked in her eyes there was a spell in the heaven-blue orbs that so entranced him he could have fallen on his knees in adoration, had she not vanished. Then, moved by a strange inspiration, he sat down at his table and commenced writing a sonnet "To Josephine," though he had never indulged in that kind of weakness before. As he wrote, a beautiful one returned and looked over his shoulder. In the transport of joy her presence created he awoke, and Hardwick was shaking him by the shoulder, admonishing him that he had overslept himself.

CHAPTER VI.

QUANDARY.

MR. THOMAS PUTNAM slept late the morning Mr. Hardwick and his young companions made the expedition to Richland Cottage, the incidents of which were related in the last chapter.

It cannot be said that the day proved agreeable to Thomas. In the first place, he was chagrined that Mr. Hardwick had omitted to include him in the select company; in the next place, he was disappointed in the conduct of Miss Grace in preferring the companionship of Hardwick; for, truth to tell, Thomas imagined he was in love with that young lady, and had indulged the flattering delusion that her gentle heart beat in unison with his own.

His ill-humor was in a measure appeased, when he looked in the mirror and saw his own immaculate form therein imaged. When he smiled complacently, the image smiled complacently also. As he beheld the Adonis-like form and gave his raven bangs the finishing dainty adjustment, he felt a conviction that, in his personal conformation and adornment, Nature and Art had combined to develop a masterpiece. Without a doubt, the little love he could bestow on any one besides himself was felt for Grace Putnam. In his ardent self-love he could not imagine that that young

lady would not indorse his own first choice of himself, and consent to occupy the second place in his heart.

After passing a long, dreary day, in the evening he sought the promenade of the veranda. This was just in time to see Hardwick and the widow drive up in the phaeton. The escape from his own companionship was a relief, and as Hardwick introduced him to the blooming widow at his side, his critical eye took her measurement, and he was pleased to pass a highly favorable opinion. He asked himself the question, "Who is this mysterious woman, with such wealth and ripeness, of ravishing beauty, who has captured the redoubtable Hardwick?"

He would have been glad to have quizzed Hardwick when the widow had taken her leave, but he was not a man with whom he felt he could safely take such liberties. He felt a reasonable confidence in this new ally, for, with those auburn locks, with the inviting, graceful curve of the rosy lip, and the divine smile that irradiated her faultless face, Miss Grace Putnam could not compete. In his estimation, Grace was her superior in attractiveness, but her inferior in the art of winning. He realized that a widow has learned so much of mankind that, when she sets her cap, she is more capable and artful than the simple maiden. He would pin his faith to this new power that had appeared in the arena of love. Hardwick had long been in his way. "Now that he has been detached, I will move on the works," said Thomas, confidently, to himself. He had not thought of Alvin Smith, the book-keeper; yet there was something strange in the girl's conduct in lingering so long on the way with that

youth. It was hardly in keeping with one of her breeding and position. Long he promenaded the veranda, but no boat appeared, and, his patience becoming exhausted, he retired to his aristocratic quarters for the night. He had no knowledge when the truants actually reached the hotel, for he had fallen into a sleep so profound that he knew nothing more until late the next morning, when he was sorely disgusted to learn that the voyagers of the previous morning had again gone forth, leaving him under the direful necessity of keeping company with himself for another dismal day.

It cannot be denied that the hour was unseasonably late when Grace and Alvin reached the hotel landing. They could not be persuaded by Hardwick, who good-naturedly met them and gallantly helped the girl to the shore, and held her hand long enough to get an arm around her shapely waist and his lips to her warm cheeks,—they could not be persuaded by Hardwick that the hour was so late.

“For loitering idlers,” said Hardwick, “who have no higher object than that of killing time, it is a trifling thing whether the evening is spent in a boat or in bed, but for working-people it is different. How can you, Miss Grace, hope to earn your board, even in chopping cord-wood, to-morrow, when you have dissipated the needful hours of rest in this fashion? And as for you, young man, how can you expect to have a clear head and steady hand with which to enter upon the duties of to-morrow?”

“I assure you, Mr. Hardwick, I have been recuperated more than you can imagine by the agreeable experiences of the day.”

"The day was truly a pleasant one ; but it is the way you have dovetailed the day into the night that plays the mischief with one's nerves. It will not do at all, Mr. Smith ; it will shatter your constitution."

"I appreciate the admonition, Mr. Hardwick, and will endeavor to reform ; but I must remind you that you are the author of the mischief. You gave me the laboring oar, and I confess the labor by moonlight is so agreeable that I take no note of time."

"Permit me to call your attention to the fact that Time gives no notes ; he keeps an open account. Every act of youthful dissipation is entered in the journal, and carried into the ledger. Don't think, because you feel no serious consequences of youthful irregularities while in the vigor of early or middle life, that no serious consequences need be expected. As the sap of robust youth and the vigor of mature life are gradually consumed by wrinkling, encroaching age, it will be found that 'Old Time' has your account in ledger and journal ; and if, in youth, you have drawn on your vitality and vigor by your irregularities of living, your draft on the old gentleman for needful vitality to make old age comfortable will be dishonored to the extent of the overt drafts of earlier life. Time is your banker. See to it that you have as much credit on his books for what is so needful in the decline of life as you can. Don't loiter in a tossing boat by moonlight so long that no time is left for sleep to minister her balm, and fit mind and body for the duties of the morrow. I might add that this old banker keeps the moral accounts of youth as well as the account of his physical acts. Here would be material for a sermon ; but the experience and ad-

monition of age, when held up to youth, are like water on the back of a duck. I cannot hope to confer any benefit by the sermon, and will therefore dismiss the congregation with my blessing."

"To me, Mr. Hardwick, your admonitions are suggestive. I trust my indiscretions will never be so grievous as to seriously affect my account with Time. I must assure you, however, that if you wish to prevent damage you must remove me from temptation. I would suggest that you put me to work on the books. Idleness is the enemy of youth and the ally of the Prince of Darkness. Seriously, I am not discharging my duty to my employers."

"Borrow no trouble on that score, Mr. Smith. It is in view of the arduous labors of to-morrow that I lecture you for spending the time of needful rest in the way you have. Be ready early to-morrow morning."

"With pleasure. Where shall we find a convenient place in which to work? I will be ready with the books at the required time."

"You are mistaken, sir. Little do you realize the gravity of the duties I shall impose upon you. You do not realize the importance of the contract Grace has entered into. Wood-chopping is hazardous. It involves dreadful danger from the falling of the trees she may cut down. She may not know which way to run when the tree commences to fall; some one must be near to instruct her. This awful duty I shall impose upon you. The books, Mr. Smith, may be behind and imperfect; they may even be lost, and the consequences serious; but what are such matters compared with the

loss of Miss Grace? I may add that the arduous labors of the three ladies of the ‘Order of the Axe’ superinduce ravenous hunger, and that requires extra duty on the part of Mrs. Wilmot; and she has extended a call to me to temporarily abandon the *table-d’hôte* and give her what assistance I can in providing eatables for the toilers. You, too, are expected and required by me, on behalf of the firm of which I am the accredited head, to lay aside all other engagements, and be on hand promptly at sunrise to-morrow morning, or as soon thereafter as the dissipation of this night will admit of, and we will row back to the scene of our prospective duties. In view of your manifest disposition to loiter on the way when Miss Grace is with you, I will now take possession of her, and bid you good-evening, leaving you to properly secure the boat.”

(Exit Mr. Hardwick and Grace.) By the steady, full light of the moon, Alvin saw the arm of Hardwick pass round her waist as with rhythmic step they walked up to the hotel.

(Smith, *solus.*) “Can that be the taciturn, sad-faced Henry Hardwick? Surely this place is enchanted, and the weird spell it casts has touched him. I, too, am transformed. Does Hardwick think that I am incapable of feeling and loving? Why, in the name of the glorious heaven above, does he constantly place me in company with that girl he so dearly loves himself? Why did he bring me to this place, under pretence that he had work of importance, and when I am here ready for work, turn me over to the sirens of this sylvan lake? Why does he ride by moonlight with the beautiful widow, and watch till midnight for a kiss from that

creature of Paradise that but now was afloat with me on this enchanted lake? I give it up!"

(Exit Alvin to his couch of fancies and dreams.)

As Hardwick and Grace wended their way up the hill to the hotel, the young lady, still under the magical spell of the witching hours of night upon the lake, said to her companion,—

"Tell me truly, Mr. Hardwick, why did you get Mr. Smith here?"

By the mellow light of the moon, Grace saw the quizzical eyes of Hardwick turn upon her as he said in reply,—

"To restore the young gentleman's failing health."

"But employers are not usually so tender in the care of their clerks and servants. You are a man of queer ideas. I suspect you had some other object. Why did you have him bring the books?"

"To get him away from them." Still those quizzical eyes were upon her as he continued, "Didn't you tell me the poor fellow was overworked, and looked as though he needed a vacation? Didn't you on that occasion feel a sympathy for him as he sat, pale and languid, at his desk? You were so thoughtful and sympathizing that it made me feel guilty, and should the young man have died of the exhaustion from which he was suffering, I felt that you could never forgive me."

"I will try and separate the irony of your humor from the real benevolence of the act, and ask you another question. What is your opinion of widows?"

"Jealous! upon my soul! I like the one we visited with yesterday; didn't you?"

Grace turned her eyes upon the face of the speaker,

trying to read by the dim light of the moon what there was in the heart of the man at her side, as she answered with tenderness, "If she can make you happy, she will make me happy, too."

Hardwick drew her closer to himself, and with a good-night kiss left her at the door of the hotel.

CHAPTER VII.

CORD-WOOD AND EGGS.

DEEP as had been her sleep, Grace awoke early enough to hear and enjoy the bird concert that usually commenced by four in the morning : she was, in fact, aroused from her sleep by uneasy footsteps in an adjoining room. From its inmate she heard that weak cough that is so dispiriting to the strong and healthy, especially when they hear it in the silent morning hours. It is suggestive of suffering. Grace reflected that even in this Northern land of blue skies and lakes, of invigorating atmosphere and beautiful landscape, sickness and misery abound. "Who is this sufferer?" mused the girl. "Of course, she is nothing to me. Each second some one passes the dread border, and loved ones weep in vain. While mine are spared I have cause to be thankful, and it is but wasting the draught of joy for me to seek or know this sufferer." So she coldly reasoned ; but that feeble cough, that slow pace of weary step, fell on a sympathizing heart, and she could not disregard it. "I was sick, and ye visited me not." In the feeble cough she heard this grievous complaint preferred against her at her throne of conscience. The day of judgment dawned with the rising sun. So it seemed to her strangely wrought spirit as she heard this lonely sufferer. "It is not too late to reverse the sentence," she said.

She arose and dressed herself hastily, and timidly rapped at the door of the sufferer. It was opened by a thin, sallow-faced, middle-aged lady, who seemed to be the sole occupant. "I trust I am not intruding," said Grace. "I occupy the adjoining room, and you are my neighbor. I observe that you are in ill health, and I call to see if I can do anything to relieve you?"

"I confess," answered the invalid, "that the night has been very long and lonely. I thought day would never come, for there was no sleep for me. You, who are blessed with health, cannot realize the distress of sleeplessness. You are kind to call: the face of one in health is a comfort. I fear my restlessness was the cause of your early rising. It is very painful to one to be under the affliction of bodily ailments, but to me it is even more disagreeable to be the cause of distressing others."

Kindly, sympathetic words on the part of Grace rapidly dispelled the gloom that overshadowed the spirit with which she entered the sick-room, for there was a ready response on the part of the invalid to the efforts of the girl to cheer her up. They were becoming acquainted with each other with mutual satisfaction, when a physician, living at Minneapolis, but spending his evenings during the heated season at the lake, was admitted by the invalid.

The doctor was introduced to the new acquaintance by his patient, and after a few commonplace words Grace withdrew. "I was sick, and ye visited me," said the Judge upon the throne, and her heart responded, "I am glad."

A company of immortal beings passed that way at

the moment, and one of them caught the expression of the young girl's face as she uttered these words, and, motioning to it, exclaimed, "Most beautiful! How blessed the mortal who, out of the cup of sorrow, can drink such beautifying wine of joy! We, who never felt the pangs of distress, are denied this luxury!"

Notwithstanding the failure of Alvin to rise early, he and his companions of the previous day were aboard the row-boat early enough in the morning to enable Hardwick to anticipate the kingly bass who was in quest of his breakfast, and suffered the fatal misfortune of mistaking the adroitly-constructed bait that flashed in the water at the end of Hardwick's trolling-line for the genuine minnow for which he was hungering.

Josephine and Ruth Richland awaited the visitors at the cottage landing. They found that the provident widow and her esteemed assistant had prepared breakfast. After partaking of it, the girls, clad in their coarse gray gowns (Josephine having provided one of her own for Grace), sallied forth to tackle the innocent young maples.

Hardwick was taken under the protecting wings of the widow, while Richland was pleased to invite Alvin to accompany him to the library.

Meanwhile, Thomas Putnam was more than ever disconcerted, wounded and distressed when he found, on rising at a late hour, that he had again been abandoned to the solitude of his own company. Persons of extensive reading and given to thinking are able to entertain and even interest themselves more than others can interest them; but Thomas was not such a person. Most of the acquaintances who had accompanied him

to the North were enjoying themselves by rowing, riding, or sauntering in the forest. Thomas was not a congenial companion, and while he was regarded as a gentleman accomplished in all the elegancies of the fashionable world, his manner was cold and forbidding, and few strangers would be inclined to pass through the frigid atmosphere, which his presence congealed, for the purpose of entertainment.

In sheer desperation he ventured upon a solitary stroll. The birds chirped their wild, sweet notes of welcome as he entered their shaded haunts, but to him they were vainly chirped. As he listlessly wandered, he hardly knew where, the sound of woodmen's axes attracted his attention. Any company would be better than his own, and he bent his steps in the direction from whence the sound came. He was startled on making the discovery that three women, in rough, gray gowns and straw hats, were the wood-choppers whose axes he had heard !

"And this," he muttered to himself, "is the boasted land of Northern thrift and civilization ! Women in the woods, with axes and maul and wedge, chopping and splitting cord-wood!"

Even the cold blood of Thomas Putnam was stirred with unwonted warmth at the sight of this indignity heaped upon woman. It was a repetition of the barbarism of mediæval ages, when the wife of the peasant was harnessed with the ox to the plough. Slavery had disappeared from the field of his native State only to present itself in this debasing guise in the boasted northland of freedom. Determining to make the acquaintance of these unfortunate drudges, he directed his steps towards

them with a vigor and animation that contrasted strongly with the languor of his previous listless progress.

Grace was the first to discover the approaching visitor, and hurriedly informed the two sisters who he was, and advised them to preserve the incognito which their dress and employment created. She speedily hastened to a small pile of wood a few steps away, and engaged herself in carrying it to the place where the hundred-dollar cord was slowly but surely developing. Josephine and Ruth kept their broad-brimmed hats well over their faces and worked with a will. Each wielded a mallet or maul, with which they managed with finely-regulated precision to strike with alternate blows the iron wedge in the four-foot maple log which, by laborious hacking, had been cut from the trunk of a small tree they had felled. Knowing nothing of the business himself, Thomas failed to see anything awkward in the work or workmen, or rather, work-women.

(Enter Thomas Putnam, with an amazed, disgusted look. The girls are so busy they seemingly do not see him till he speaks.)

Thomas: "Rather extraordinary work for females, I should say!"

Josephine (with an air of indifference): "I don't see anything particularly extraordinary about it. I take it, you cannot belong in these parts."

Thomas: "I am very glad to say, I do not."

Josephine: "May I inquire where you are from?"

Thomas: "St. Louis."

Josephine: "St. Louis is a fine city, I am told. The working women there do hard drudging in the hot

kitchens. It must be a heavy draught on their constitutions. For my part, I greatly prefer this out-door work. We enjoy it."

Thomas (making furtive glances into the partially concealed face of *Josephine*) : "Madam, you astonish me. Do you consider this suitable employment for a woman?"

Josephine : "My dear sir, we are creatures of conventionality. Looked upon as an occupation, I should regard wood-chopping almost as unobjectionable for a woman as that of working over the tub, as many women daily do, until they are prematurely worn out; but as a means of obtaining moderate, healthful exercise, and earning a supply of money, give me the axe and the maul and wedge every time. Labor is to be exalted by intelligent workers. Swinging the axe, sir, is an art. You are to impart a spirit to the sharp, cold edge that will make it penetrate the log almost of its own volition. And then the log itself is a study that well repays the intelligent laborer. Look at each of these tell-tale rings; this is the story of the tender germ, the struggling plant, the sapling, and, finally, the majestic maple. Each circle tells of a spring-time, with its birds and blossoms; a summer of deep verdure; an autumn of matured fruit; and a winter of slumber. And then, if you will but take one of these tiny chips and examine it with a microscope, you will discover many interesting features, especially the innumerable openings between the fibres, through which the sap is drawn by capillary attraction. How many men of the past have devoted the best years of their lives to the study of the subject of plants! Linnæus, of Swe-

den, the Jussieus (father and son), Candolle, and in our own time, Darwin, and others who are still prosecuting their researches. Why, sir, I never strike an axe into a beautiful, curly-grained maple without a feeling of regret that a living structure so complicated and perfect should be destroyed. Tenderly I go about my work, and I am careful to select only the trees that are growing where they are already too thick."

Thomas: "I gather from your conversation that you are possessed of superior advantages."

Josephine: "Not at all, sir. In this country no one has any excuse to be ignorant. Especially no woman has. For her, there is thrown open a new world; countless avenues of industry invite her; art and science have given her her manumission papers. It only remains for her to ignore the frivolities of an obsolete age, and assert the right and display the powers that are hers by the laws of nature. The most powerful bird in the world is the female eagle. The time will come, sir, when woman will occupy the same natural pre-eminence in the realm of humanity. Ages of domestic servitude and slavery have degraded her to the dependence of which the simpering woman of the drawing-room boasts. Now she is abroad, she is becoming a power. Already we have the man woman's tailor; before many generations pass we will have the man housekeeper and the man in the children's nursery. Have no fear, sir, that wood-chopping will impair a woman's powers. Here in the grand forest, by the genial exercise of swinging the axe, I am strengthened for the real work of intellectual activity. When the vacation is over, I will be able to

resume my university studies with a vim and energy that will carry me through the term with colors flying.

"You must excuse me, sir; my work must be performed, for on the earnings of my axe I expect to have the means of going through the university. Come, Ruth, swing your maul."

Exit Thomas, while the young ladies with measured stroke resume the attack upon the iron wedge. To say that Thomas was dumfounded is to put it mildly. He resumed his wandering, more than ever convinced that the women of the North were likely to be developed into physical and intellectual monstrosities, before whom the refining influences of chivalry would go down.

He emerged unexpectedly upon the open ground overlooking the lake, and in the vicinity of Richland Cottage. It was near the hour of noon, and it was with pleasure he stumbled upon Hardwick, who was in the garden in company with the charming widow, engaged in picking a mess of green pease.

"Upon my soul, Putnam, you take me by surprise. I did not know you could venture so far abroad in this wild wilderness!" exclaimed Hardwick.

"Wild or not," answered the new-comer, "I confess that I am lost."

"Not now," said the widow, while her under lip sank into that beautiful repose that invited a lover's kiss.

"Not now," responded Thomas; and, with a suggestive accent and glance of his eyes, he added, "I am not the one who is lost."

A slight display of blood was seen in the white, delicately-chiselled face of the widow as she said,

"We are fortunate in having been found by you, and I trust you will favor us with your company at the mid-day lunch, or, rather, dinner; for we are old-fashioned people, and prefer to transform lunch into something more substantial."

"You honor me, Mrs. Wilmot; and I should be doing great injustice to myself to decline the invitation, for I assure you that I am possessed of a ravenous appetite. It seems peculiar to this latitude; and I am bound to confess that, after coming out of the woods into this open place, the sun pours down with a power that would do no discredit to Missouri."

At this juncture a stalwart countryman drove along the timber-road and drew up at the garden. He was an athlete in appearance, but mild in manner and quite social with Mrs. Wilmot. He inquired particularly about the grape-vines, which it appeared he had set out in the garden, and seemed interested in the raspberry bushes. His clothes fitted him none too well. His hands and feet were large. There was an easy, good-natured air about him that disarmed criticism. His hair was unkempt, and his grizzly beard had the appearance of having been long since abandoned to the sole charge of nature. His face was exceedingly intelligent, and his partially-closed eyes were of such brightness and penetration that one would feel sure, if he had anything to conceal from them, he would need to take extra precaution. In a moment he took the full measurement of Putnam. He had heard his remark about the hot sun, and after a few moments' conversation with Mrs. Wilmot, without waiting for the superfluous formality of an introduction, he took up the sub-

ject of heat, and informed Mr. Putnam that the soil on the shore of Minnetonka, when exposed to the sun, was warmer than that of Missouri.

Putnam was no less startled by the unceremonious familiarity of this Northern boor than by the remarkable statement he had just made ; but having observed the freedom with which Mrs. Wilmot addressed him, he felt that good breeding required him to ignore the incivility of the intruder, and tolerate his evident forwardness in addressing a gentleman.

"Why, sir," Putnam exclaimed, "in Missouri, at this time of the year, the economic housewife roasts her eggs by covering them for a few hours with the soil, in the sunshine."

"They did the same thing in Southern Ohio, where I was brought up, when they wanted them cooked hard," answered the man of Minnetonka.

At this juncture the maid of the Emerald Isle was seen passing with a basket of eggs which she had been gathering from nests in the vicinity.

"Here, Abby," said the countryman to her familiarly, "let me have a couple of those eggs." Taking them out of the basket, he continued, "I will put these eggs in the loose ground there on the south side of the garden fence, and by this time to-morrow they will be cooked hard."

This was so candidly and confidently said that the entire company looked into the quiet, cool face of the speaker to detect some evidence of banter, but nothing of the kind appeared.

"See here, stranger," exclaimed Putnam, "I am not a betting man, but that is too preposterous. I am

willing to wager ten dollars that the eggs will not be cooked by to-morrow noon, nor ever."

Quietly and unconcernedly taking out a sadly-worn pocket-book, the countryman passed a ten-dollar bill to Mrs. Wilmot, saying, "Hold the stakes." Putnam could not back out, and also deposited his ten-dollar bill with the widow. The old countryman placed the two eggs at the spot designated, and invited the company to be on the ground at the time named, and, getting into his wagon, drove away.

CHAPTER VIII.

DOCTOR AND FLOWERS.

"I AM surprised," said Hardwick, as the staid old countryman disappeared in the timber, "that a gentleman of your dignity should so far depart from your high standard of gentility as to condescend to make a bet with one of the boorish mud-sills of the North."

"The fellow's assurance is as cool as a Minnesota winter, and it is my deliberate purpose to teach him a lesson," replied Putnam.

"This is a land, Mr. Putnam, in which every one has something to do, and if not too hard, I will be pleased to enlist you in the labor in which Mr. Hardwick has volunteered to assist me," said Mrs. Wilmot, as she resumed the work of picking pease.

"I enter upon the work with pleasure; but let me trust you will not want me to help you in chopping cord-wood, for I observed, as I passed through this timber, the ladies of this locality have entered that field of labor."

Mrs. Wilmot: "Ha! ha! Have you made that discovery! Not much like the fashionable exercise of the South, is it?"

Putnam: "I trust it will not become a general thing, for I assure you it appears to me the height of absurdity. As I passed along, I had a talk with one of those strong-

minded women. She was engaged in chopping wood to earn money to pay her way through college."

Mrs. Wilmot: "Oh, if you go round here very much, such matters will cease to astonish you. There! I think we have enough pease for dinner. Now, Mr. Hardwick, you will please take Mr. Putnam to the library and introduce him to father. (Exit Hardwick and Putnam.)

Hardly had the gentlemen disappeared, before the young ladies, each bearing her axe on her shoulder, rushed upon the widow.

Grace: "Oh, Mrs. Wilmot! we have had such fun! Would you believe it, we had a call from that most accomplished gentleman, Cousin Tom Putnam,—one of the stiffest and coldest fellows you ever met. He never suspected who we were, and Josephine just stuffed him with all the high notions you ever heard of, and he left us, convinced that we were real wood-choppers, belonging in the country, struggling by the edge of our axes to cut our way through college."

Mrs. Wilmot: "Not too loud, girls; he may hear you."

The girls (all at once and together): "Is he here?"

Mrs. Wilmot: "He has just been helping me pick pease for dinner. He is a magnificent specimen of a gentleman,—rather awkward as a picker of pease."

Josephine: "Do you really mean that walking fashion-plate could bend enough to reach the pease and pick them?"

Mrs. Wilmot: "I noticed the effort was great, but as a gentleman he could not well decline my request. He

is in the library now, hungry as a bear. Do you suppose he will know you when you get out of your working toggery and dress yourselves up? But I know he won't; he has not the least suspicion. Off with you, and dress for dinner." (Exit the girls, bearing their axes.)

How Putnam was ushered into the library and introduced to Richland, and the half-sneer with which he recognized the book-keeper as the welcome guest, need not be told.

In due time lunch was announced ; and under the shade of the maples, where it was spread, Mr. Putnam was introduced to the two Misses Richland, who appeared in most becoming costume. The face of Josephine, delicate as the blossom of a peach, with the slightest coloring imparted by exposure to the sun and wind, betrayed no sign of the athletic wood-chopper so recently seen by the stranger. She was in the best of spirits, and more than once found it difficult to abstain from informing the cool, self-complacent gentleman that she was in fact the strong-minded, flaming comet that had flashed athwart his astonished vision.

Alvin Smith could not help noticing the unusual animation of the girls, and it was hard for him to tell whether Grace or Josephine most charmed him.

The conversation turned on the subject of working-men and women.

Grace : " No more distressing servitude can be imagined than that endured by the fashionable lady. You cannot imagine the luxury of escape to a cozy retreat like this, where nature and art have combined to win me back to the real enjoyment of life."

Putnam: "Have you supplied yourself yet, Grace, with an axe and a maul and an iron wedge?"

Grace: "What on earth do you mean?"

Putnam: "Those are, apparently, the kind of instruments the ladies of this country use to gain a livelihood, and acquire sufficient vigor to pass creditably through college. By all means, Grace, provide yourself with an axe and maul and iron wedge. It is likely to become the woman's badge of independence."

Josephine: "I have heard of the ladies you speak of, Mr. Putnam. Did you really encounter one of them?"

Putnam: "Three, upon my honor. I thought they were ashamed to show their faces, for they studiously wore their broad-brimmed hats, so that I could not see these wonders of the century. One of them, at least, had a tongue that would have done no discredit to the best platform lecturer. I declare, I could not keep up with her. She assured me there was an art in swinging the axe so exquisite and rare that, when understood, the implement found its way into the maple as gracefully as a dancing-master goes through a figure in the ball-room. I would be glad for you to make her acquaintance, Miss Richland. You would forswear the drawing-room and parlor forever, and take to the woods and university."

Josephine: "How you surprise me! Was she really intelligent?"

Putnam: "She talked like a professional; and as to smartness, my word for it, if that girl could only be captured and tamed, she would outshine any of the belles of St. Louis."

Josephine: "You flatter me—her. You would hardly say that to her face."

Putnam: "I assure you I felt like doing so; but she was so very industrious that, when the conversation was at the best, the vixen informed me that she must lose no more time, and turned her muscular back to me, and called to the girl with her to swing her maul."

Josephine: "You said there were three."

Putnam: "There were; but one of them seemed shy. She was graceful as a fawn. I tried to get a glimpse of her face, but she was so engaged piling up cord-wood that she did not consider me of sufficient importance to even give me a passing notice."

Richland: "I am glad, Mr. Putnam, you have had a chance to meet these working-women of the North. I take it this is your first trip up here. I have myself met those same girls. I am happy to say that my fatherly appearance and countrified style served to remove the barriers created by your city manners and dress. I trust Mrs. Richland will not be jealous when I inform you that they are remarkably sweet and intelligent girls. They do not at all hesitate to reward my trouble in visiting them with kisses that warm the blood in my aging veins. The vigor they have acquired by the artistic use of the axe in the open air has added to their power to enthrall the susceptible hearts of young men. For this reason I have exercised considerable care to keep Mr. Smith under my guardianship while he remains with us. You, Mr. Putnam, will do well not to expose yourself again, in case any fair maiden in St. Louis has claims upon you."

The dialogue might be extended, but the progress of our story must not be too much retarded by indulging further in this dinner-talk. All who were at the table

very soon discovered the design to conceal the identity of the wood-choppers, and richly enjoyed the admirable manner in which the conversation was conducted.

Unquestionably, Putnam believed the ladies he had encountered in the wood were the personages described by Richland. There was something so humorous in the manner in which Richland spoke of them that he joined heartily in the jollity it occasioned, and Grace thought her cousin never appeared to better advantage. She almost hoped he would at last discover the incognito, and in the beams of her love be melted down and cast in more amiable form and character. She feared she had done him an injustice, but at this time there was no retreat. Putnam was prevailed upon to spend the afternoon. He found it enjoyable, and in the attentions Grace bestowed on him he discovered, as he believed, evidence of a passion not less tender than that he felt for her. This was enough to restore good-humor to the man who for the past two days had been in a decided pet.

Near the close of the day Grace sought the industrious housewife, Mrs. Wilmot, and told her of the sick woman at the hotel, and begged of her to allow her to have a few roses to carry to her.

"It is a blessed thought," answered the widow. "The way to be happy ourselves is to minister to those who are afflicted."

Mrs. Wilmot not only took her ready scissors and clipped the roses, but other flowers that were in season; and, as Grace went bearing them in her generous hand, the widow looked after her with an admiring eye and tender heart.

At the hotel Grace sought the room of the invalid, and was not a little surprised to find that the doctor had already arrived from the city, and was in the room of his patient. As she entered with her fragrant, beautiful flowers, fresh from their native stem, the doctor was struck with her expressive countenance; she seemed utterly unconscious of her own existence. He thought he saw before him the highest type of womanly loveliness. With a very slight coloring of the face—perhaps it was the reflection of the flowers in her hand—she quietly greeted him and hastened to the invalid, reclining in an easy-chair, and, with that tenderness of look which only a woman can bestow in the chamber of sickness, greeted her with words that were the breath of inspiration to the sufferer. Grace was mistress of the art of making a kind act appreciable; it consisted in doing with the heart as well as the hand. She engaged in conversation with the doctor and his patient, and time was forgotten. The doctor was an admirable conversationalist, while Grace was not only a good listener, but of captivating address.

When she realized how much time she had spent, she was surprised, for it had been her intention to deliver the flowers and return to the cottage before the darkness prevented. In that latitude the summer evening is so gradual in its approach, and night herself is so luminous, that one is frequently surprised to discover by the striking of a clock that nine has arrived, without a light being in requisition. It was so on this occasion; and when the doctor learned that Grace expected to return to the cottage that evening, he was led to proffer his company as a necessary escort. Upon such slight

acquaintance she hesitated ; but there was such ease and courtliness in his conversation and manner that he seemed more like an old friend than an acquaintance of a day. As the two wended their way slowly among the great maples along the winding road, the full moon affording ample light, Grace felt an unaccountable attraction, which drew her irresistibly to this young physician she had never met till that morning. She felt ashamed of herself ; and yet this feeling permeated her whole being, and she felt that with this stranger there was a sense of comfort and confidence she had never before experienced. The conversation was commonplace, and not in the least calculated to awaken or arouse that exquisite enjoyment she so sensibly felt. She taunted herself with inconstancy ; she reflected that she already loved Hardwick with all her heart, and that she loved Smith, in spite of this affection for Hardwick. "And now this giddy thing is warming up to this acquaintance of a day ! What am I to think of myself ?" she exclaimed to her inner consciousness, as she walked demurely by the side of this third affinity. Was maiden ever so mutable ?

Arrived at the cottage, she was not a little discomposed to find the gentlemen in the yard indulging in decided anxiety on her account. She introduced her new acquaintance, who remained for at least an hour, making himself quite at home with the family, who seemed to have frequently met him before.

The heart of Putnam was depressed when he saw Grace so amiable in her conversation with this new rival ; for to him every one was a rival who moved within the circle of the young lady he loved next

to himself. Alvin did not take it so much to heart, for the counter-attraction of Josephine was palliative. Both Alvin and Grace thought that the only bodies that moved right along in their congenial orbits were Hardwick and the widow.

Eventually the company broke up, Hardwick, Alvin, and Grace remaining at the cottage, according to previous arrangement, and Putnam and the doctor returning together to the hotel.

CHAPTER IX.

MITTENED.

THE morning dawned clear and refreshing, and our enterprising young ladies were early in the forest, intent on making substantial addition to the cord of wood, or, more properly, to the prospective cord that grew but slowly, for, in spite of the brave spirits, there were blistered hands and lame arms, and the girls could but think that the lot of the laboring man must be sad, especially when it consigns him to the duty of chopping down trees and working them up into cord-wood. There was, however, too much ambition in their souls to allow them to complain or desist. An hour's work in the morning would suffice, if repeated often enough, to enable them to make a substantial showing, both in cord-wood and physical improvement. On this morning they were particularly anxious to get through with their hour's work early, and return home before Mr. Putnam should appear, as they had reason to expect he would.

Alvin, who was not seriously expected to do anything in the line of work, repaired to the library, where he found entertainment in the way of reading. Hardwick and Richland left him to himself during the morning hours, and when the girls returned from the woods and resumed their ordinary habits, they went in a body to the seclusion of this young student, where they found him poring over the pages of Montaigne's "Spirit of the Law."

Josephine : "Mr. Smith, how can you content yourself with this dull, dismal 'Spirit of the Law' ?"

Alvin : "The child wonders what use there is in learning the names of the letters of the alphabet. He discovers in time that those twenty-six letters constitute the key that unlocks the storehouse of knowledge. But, ladies, by what right do you consign the 'Spirit of the Law' to the dull and dismal sphere of existence ? You mistake the quality of this spirit. It is, in fact, the torch-bearer of civilization. The lion of the wilderness is disappearing with the wilderness, because this benign torch-bearer has cast the light of civil government upon the barbarian, and man, secure in his person and property, has caused the wilderness to blossom. So, too, the human lion and lawless beast of prey has been driven from his den and compelled to submit to the law of the land. The wild beast, both animal and human, by the light of this divine torch, will be traced to their last retreat and compelled to submit to the domestication of the civil law or perish. The study of the law is only dull and dismal when the student fails to realize the grandeur of the subject, and is not enlightened and inspired by this spirit."

Josephine : "Bravo ! Such a torch-bearer is certainly capable of dispelling all darkness and gloom. There is more comfort in contemplating it than in splitting cord-wood ; but I suspect you are possessed of an imagination that lends power to your eyes, so that you can see and tell of things invisible to ordinary mortals. My idea is that law is studied generally as one learns, for instance, to handle the axe, for the profit that is expected."

Alvin : "Doubtlessly that is the spirit that animates

many students, but such students never rise to the true and highest conception of the law. The world has not as yet attained the true conception of it; it is the hand-maid of the arts and sciences. It is the divine gospel of peace on earth and good-will to man. At its altar the sword will be transformed into an instrument of husbandry, and war shall be impossible for law will be supreme,—and law is the minister of peace.”

Josephine: “Poetical, truly; but, alas! the law is written in prose, and, from what I have seen of father’s business, law is prosaic. One must read something outside of law-books to imbibe this poetry, and I am suspicious that you have found your inspiration in a way that ordinary students do not enjoy.”

Alvin: “It may be that the journals and ledgers have conduced to this end.”

Grace knew the source of the inspiration. It was a mind, singularly pure and exalted, and the love and companionship of a widowed mother, who had ever exerted herself to ennable her son by instilling into his being noble thoughts and aspirations. She watched his bright, expressive face with a pleasure she could not conceal from the young man, and turning from *Josephine* to Grace, he said playfully,—

“There *are* spirits abroad at this place more congenial than that of the law, and now that they have condescended to beam upon me with their enchanting eyes, I am only too glad to submit to their charm and be led by them wherever they will. The last and most beautiful creation of the ‘spirit of law’ is the woman of modern civilization. At her feet I cast my crown and worship.”

Saying this, he arose, took his hat and invited the ladies to take a walk. The invitation was accepted, and each and all of them felt that they had in Mr. Smith a champion whom they could love and admire.

Alvin had not realized that it was the wrong time of the day to walk out with comfort, even in the shady groves on the shore of Minnetonka. The sun was uncomfortably warm, and our friends found walking oppressive. They concluded to take a short stroll in the garden, and arrived there just in time to join company with the stately Putnam, Mr. Hardwick, Mrs. Wilmot, Mr. and Mrs. Richland, and last, but by no means least, the countryman who had undertaken on a wager to convince the gentleman from St. Louis that an egg could be cooked as economically by the sunshine at Minnetonka Lake as at the mouth of the muddy Missouri. It was noticed that the fine young Irish lady was also on the ground, and taking in the situation with an unusual twinkling of her fine, gray eyes.

Countryman: "Happy to find you all here. I am not a gambler, but if I can by demonstration satisfy this friend and evident stranger that here, on the confines of the most beautiful lake in the world, nature has provided a soil as genial and warm as even sunny Italy can boast of, I shall be conferring a benefit on mankind in advertising the fact and promoting immigration to Minnesota."

Richland: "That speech, Mr. Countryman, smacks of the Hennepin County Horticultural Society. The demonstration is called for."

Hardwick: "Aye, the demonstration."

Countryman: "Very well; I will produce the eggs."

With an air of supreme confidence the countryman went to the place of deposit of the two eggs, and, in plain sight of the company, took them from their warm resting place, handed them to Mrs. Wilmot, and requested her to break them. She complied, and to the astonishment of all present, except the countryman and the gray-eyed maiden from Erin's Isle, the eggs were found to be cooked hard.

Widow: "What do you say to this, Mr. Putnam?"

Putnam: "Lost!"

Widow: "As badly lost as you were yesterday?"

Countryman: "The gentleman has by experience learned what it is hard for the outside world to understand, that here, in Minnesota, and especially here at Minnetonka Lake, we have a climate and soil as near perfect as the benevolent Author of our being vouchsafes to man. Our summers are short, but while they last, they are unsurpassed in all that is required to develop vegetation, and especially fruit, that natural and most appropriate food of man. (Receiving the two ten-dollar bills from the widow.) Ladies and gentlemen, I trust our meeting has been instructive and entertaining. If we wish to enjoy light and warmth, we must bring the polished steel of the city in contact with the hard flint of the country. Will be pleased to see you at any time." (Exit with grave countenance and awkward gait, Putnam gazing after him in a bewildered, dazed state.)

Widow (at lunch-table): "Mr. Putnam, will you have your eggs hard or rare?"

Smith: "Don't you think, Mr. Putnam, that 'countryman,' as you all seem to call him, was eggs-act-ing?"

Josephine: "Don't you think, Mr. Putnam, the fellow's assurance is as cool as a Minnesota winter?"

Putnam: "The fact is, I have passed the bound of thinking. What is the use of thinking, when such great hulks of humanity as that so readily get the best of you? Mr. Richland, pray enlighten me; do you know who he is?"

Richland: "The winner? The fact is, Mr. Putnam, he is a very ordinary man for this locality. You must understand you are now in Hennepin County; that Hennepin County includes within its borders the pivotal city of Minneapolis. Lake Minnetonka is surrounded with a class of people who know everything and can do anything. I did not suppose, however, they could so readily roast eggs in my garden. Abby, my daughter, you will profit by the example and save fuel."

Abby, the Irish maid, *sotto voce* (who enters while Richland is speaking): "Faith! and precious little fuel was saved; for didn't I have to take out the eggs and cook them meself. For a man of his size, Mr. Putnam, is the weakest gull me blessid eyes ever looked on. The tin dollars the man give me—God bless him! —for doin' that bit of cookin' will go well towards settin' me up in house-kapin' when Pat gets here, and we have a bit of weddin'."

In the cool of the afternoon Grace reminded Mrs. Wilmot of her invalid acquaintance at the hotel, and begged another supply of fresh flowers. "This time," said the girl, "I want to go early, before the doctor arrives, for I do not wish him to imagine that I take the flowers to get into his company."

"For a young lady as well provided as you with gentlemen friends, it may be well enough, for, if I can judge from the deportment of your cousin, he would be most likely to take it much to heart should you repeat the adventure of last night. But don't be uneasy ; the doctor is quite able to take care of you in case of trouble. He belongs to the cream of the city, and is—"

"No matter what he is, Mrs. Wilmot ; I want to get there and back without seeing him."

Grace walked leisurely along the forest road, which was becoming familiar to her, meditating on the events of the day. She could but feel that her cousin had been cruelly guyed, and that in a measure she had been a party to it. She was glad when that individual overtook her on his return to his quarters at the hotel. She manifested this feeling in her manner and address, and he felt encouraged to proceed with the momentous business that had for some time been uppermost in his mind.

Grace : "Why, Tom, this is kind of you. I supposed you would have preferred to remain with the ladies and have a good time. You see, I have become a Sister of Charity. I am carrying flowers to the invalid I visited last night. Tom, don't you think you have been imposed upon all round ?"

Tom : "How so ?"

Grace : "Why, didn't you know those wood-choppers were the two Richland girls and my own guilty self ?"

Tom : "You astonish me ! You one of those wood-choppers !"

Grace : "To be sure I was, my dear old boy ; and I

confess that you were more readily taken in than I thought possible. And then about those eggs!"

Tom : "What revelation have you to make about them? I confess there is something deuced queer about the affair, but I can't understand it."

Grace : "How easy it would have been for that bright Irish girl to conspire with that big, shrewd countryman, and secretly take the eggs and cook them and return them to the same place. The bet was that the eggs would be cooked hard, and they were."

Tom : "By heavens! It is a revelation, indeed. I was a dupe, and you sympathize with—with—Oh, Grace! how can I thank you for this expression of sympathy with one so much in need of a guardian? Be my guardian, Grace; be my wife."

Grace : "Why, Tom, you take my breath! I will be glad to guard you, but should I become your wife I should disappoint you."

Tom : "Never, never. You are just fitted to adorn my home, Grace."

Grace : "Adornments are to be had at any first-class furniture store. You would want a wife to love you, would you not? Now, Tom, be considerate. The exhilarating atmosphere of this place has intoxicated you; you are grateful to me because I have taken your part when I think you have been imposed upon. I now take your part in a matter of far greater importance. I think too much of you to have you wed a woman who likes you as a relative and friend, but who has it not in her power to give you her heart."

Tom : "Am I too late, then? Have you given it to another?"

Grace : "Now, Tom, I want you to be your own self. You imagine you love me. You will find out within a reasonable time that you are mistaken. I am not in love with you, and in matters of the heart we are not masters. (Taking his arm.) Come, Tom, let us hasten, for I am afraid of that doctor. He will think that I carry flowers in order to meet him. Get you a wife, Tom ; you are old enough and good enough ; but please drop me out of the list of possible candidates. Now you will not feel badly, will you ?"

Tom : "Oh, Grace ! How your inexperienced tongue pierces my heart. You talk trivially about the most serious question of our life. I am older than you. Spontaneous love is a myth. It comes only by cultivation. The emotional sentiment of love is but a fragile wild rose that fades with the first exposure to the glare of the sun ; it exists only in the imagination. The love of real life is friendship ; tried by acquaintance and cemented by mutual confidence and respect. This is a business and not an ideal world. We have always known each other, and there is no reason why we should not have the good fortune to marry and be happy."

Grace : "In a business point of view, you speak sensibly ; but I cannot subscribe to your sentiments, and am not old enough to give up what you say is a mere matter of sentiment and imagination. Marriages of the kind you are in favor of are abundant, and the divorce courts well supplied with grists. Should I marry a man without loving him, I should despise the man who became such a husband with his eyes open, and despise myself. Now, Tom, let us forever abandon

this project of yours. You are not only a friend, but a relative. I have no disposition to marry on the terms you propose, and if only such marriage is offered, I shall remain unwed. Here we are at the hotel. See the beautiful sunset on the lake."

Tom : "It is a symbol of the sunset of my love. With your refusal, my sun of hope goes down. My disappointment is crushing. I must, however, yield to fate and abandon hope. Good-by."

Grace : "The setting sun leaves but the shadow of the revolving earth. It will reappear with the morning, in the east, bright and warm. So will your sun of hope rise again. Good-by, Tom."

She raises her eyes imploringly to his, and, lifting her arms to his shoulders, puckers her cherry lips for a kiss. She was never more beautiful, and, as Tom presses his lips to hers, he enfolds her in his arms for a moment, and is gone.

Grace (solus) : "Poor Tom ! I did not know he had so much feeling. But let him once get me in his cage, and his jealousy would be the death of me. His heart is too old and tough to break on my account. I am determined he shall not have a chance to crush mine. But the doctor ! My ! If he should be here."

However, the doctor had not arrived ; but when he did come his eyes rested with satisfaction on the fresh flowers ; and approaching them he inhaled their delicious odor. Ah, doctor ! the flowers carried by the hand of a beautiful young lady to the sick-room not only promote the comfort of the invalid, but affect the heart of a susceptible young physician !

CHAPTER X.

THE MITTENED MAN MEETS HIS MOTHER AT HER OLIVE STREET HOME.

ON the day after the discouraging dialogue between Grace and her devoted relative, a trunk of regulation dimensions was transferred from the Hotel St. Louis to the landing, and put aboard an early morning boat that touched at that place, while with solemn visage but scrupulously-adjusted bang, moustache, cravat, hat, and black Prince Albert coat, Mr. Thomas Putnam might have been seen entering the narrow gangway of the same craft. His bill at the hotel had been carefully scrutinized and paid, and, disgusted with the place and the people, including himself, his eyes were now turned to the bachelor quarters in his mother's home on Olive Street, in the staid, undemonstrative city of St. Louis. Welcome would be the rattle of the wagons on the stone pavements, and the clatter and rattle of cable-cars passing the ancient mansion. Nevermore would the hollow smiles of shallow-pated maidens lure him from the even tenor of his way. Humiliated, but not humbled, he pursued his solitary journey. In vain the witching, sweet-smiling babe in the pretty mother's loving arms crowded in the seat opposite. In its innocent, pure face no balm was found for his proud heart. The newsboy passed him as a thing to be dreaded, while the fellow-

passengers studied his frigid features and buttoned their coats, though it was midsummer.

The Widow Putnam was the one person in all the world, except himself, who devotedly loved and unreservedly admired Thomas Putnam. He was her only child. In his cool reserve, stately bearing, and distinguished appearance she realized the perfect fruit of the high culture and breeding she had been at so much care and expense to develop.

But let it not be imagined that this high-toned dame was exempt from all mundane care. She had failed to prevail on him to keep *en rapport*—she was fond of using these French phrases—with the inhabitants of the rather apocryphal sphere of what she was pleased to call “the first society.” His personal tastes were so fastidious that very few could approximate his self-measured standard of excellence. He possessed the judgment to see that the luminaries of this sphere were but satellites. Shine as they might, he saw it was but a borrowed splendor they reflected, and despised them in spite of the urgent appeals of his mother. With all the adulation of self and his fond mother, he was not so demoralized in sentiment and feeling as not to prefer the company of sensible people, and as these people seldom appeared in his mother’s select circle, he lived much alone, or in the company of business men.

Disappointed with the society into which his mother introduced him, and unconscious of the genuine circle of good society, in which worth is recognized and sham discarded, he grew to be the cynical, cold, reserved, repulsive bachelor we find him at this time.

His mother almost despaired of ever seeing him the

established head of a household,—a family she would be pleased to see mentioned in social parlance, as the first and best in the distinguished city of his birth. She was in his confidence as much as any one, and she discovered with a degree of satisfaction, more intense than her cultivated reserve would allow her to express, the dawning of what she was disposed to call love on the part of her son for the most promising young lady, to whom he had unsuccessfully offered his scrupulously clean, white, and tender hand, in the immediate vicinity of the Hotel St. Louis. It was due to her management that her finical son and this lady had been induced to join the party of excursionists to Lake Minnetonka. She trusted that her fascination would lead the cold but splendid gentleman to unbend before this sweet charmer, and gather her to him and herself. That she should decline the chance of an alliance so great and honorable was an idea that never entered her doting head.

When, without previous notice, Thomas walked into his mother's sitting-room on his return from the North, a glance in his face warned her that he had not returned with flying colors.

"You surprise me, Thomas. What brought you back so soon? Nothing serious is the matter, I hope?"

"I was gallivanting long enough in that deuced wild place. What comfort there is in watching the hungry hordes that wander round the lake, and make themselves ridiculous in pretending to enjoy it, is more than I can tell. For down-right comfort, give me the old home and—mother;" and with this bit of flattery he received in reward a kiss from the old lady that was as genuine and true as could be evolved in an establish-

ment where artificiality had destroyed all that was pleasing and natural.

"Gallivanting! What will become of you, Thomas, if you hold your head so high that you cannot see the people among whom you are obliged to move? I am afraid you are too exclusive and impatient. Society is dull and stupid, of course; but what would our world be without it? We must put up with our inferiors when we are without superiors, don't you know?"

"No, mother; I don't know and I don't care! Your very proper niece, whom you tried to convince me was the person above all others fittest to be your daughter-in-law——"

"Tried to convince!" interrupted the mother. "Unless I was greatly deceived by appearances, *you* were fully convinced for yourself. I hope you have not turned your critical microscopic vision on her, and discovered spots that make her objectionable! Oh, Thomas; those spots will appear on the best of them, when you turn your magnifying glass upon them. You know that even the sun has its dark, ugly spots when you come to look at it that way."

"If every one had the regard and love for me my mother entertains, I would have smooth sailing; but it is surprising how others overlook my good points. Even that marvellous creature without spot or blemish, Grace Putnam, has failed to discover my merits, and has had the audacity to reject my hand!"

The old lady swooned. That her son should have suffered this humiliation was a horror too awful for her to contemplate. The son had long been familiar with this refined manifestation of his mother's breeding,

and awaited her restoration to consciousness with composure. Opening her eyes and mouth at the same time, she ejaculated, "Reject you! That plain, conceited, stuck-up——" Again her feelings were overpowering, and she sank back in the billowy cushions of her lounge.

Thomas could not indorse these last utterances of his distracted mother. He muttered to himself, "The girl has an admirable spirit. Her old-fashioned ideas of love are charming, even if not fashionable. I was too rash. I overlooked the trifle of hearts. That is to be pursued as the wary hunter pursues the chamois of the Alps,—with infinite pains and caution. I had forgotten the heart. I fear my mother has left the heart out of the question in her laudable effort to bring me up so as to shine as a star in her firmament. Hearts are no part of my assets. I find that they are not to be acquired by the ordinary dicker for homes and position."

"After all, Tom," said the old lady, reviving, "it is no killing affair. You are no spring chicken, and know that there are plenty of other girls with as fine forms and faces, and even better prospects, than the silly creature who was so ignorant, and in all probability crazed by the trashy novels she reads."

"Yes, mother," answered the son, dejectedly; "but suppose I should find another girl just suited to your fancy, and I should propose to her, and she should demand an inventory of my assets, and on examination ask where the heart is, what should be my answer?"

"The question would be vulgar and unfashionable," was the reply.

CHAPTER XI.

CAPTAIN WILLIAM PUTNAM.

ONLY a few blocks from the dwelling of the Widow Putnam and on the same street stood that of Captain William Putnam. Like its proprietor, this dwelling had seen its best days. Once it had been the finest and most imposing on the street. In a style peculiar to an earlier generation, it sided directly up to the street leaving no place for porch or front yard. Little, green-shuttered windows and one small door-way in a great, three-story, red-brick wall were what the passer-by would observe. Encroaching business had, with unmannerly disregard of the ancient proprieties of the place, gained possession of the locality, and society had demanded more exclusive quarters in which to withdraw itself from contact with vulgar trade.

The few sycamores that still maintained standing-room on the street side seemed in the last desperate struggle for existence. Their stiff, dust-grimed leaves were gray and sparse, like the hair on the head of the aged man.

But through the little windows of this antiquated house one could see that a deft and capable hand had been employed in hanging and draping the rich curtains, and the flower-pots and boxes on the sills of the upper windows evinced the presence of some one animated with a sense of beauty and taste.

This was the home of Grace Putnam. And she it was who constituted the last link that held the old gentleman to the place. She was, in fact, his only remaining hold upon life.

On the evening of the interesting interview between Dame Putnam and her son Thomas, William Putnam and his old housekeeper sat alone at the dinner-table. The exceedingly warm weather, and still more the absence of Grace and her young company, that usually enlivened the house and imparted cheerfulness to the old man and his housekeeper, was beginning to tell on each.

" You want to clear out awhile, captain," said the old housekeeper ; " it is a shame for you to be peggin' away at your business when the weather is hot enough to melt the life out of you. And I'd like to know what it's all for. You have more than you can eat or wear, and goodness knows Grace can't enjoy possession of your gettin's when she knows how much you slaved yourself in the gettin' of it."

" I can't well go, Mrs. Hubbs, while Hardwick and Tom are both away. I don't mind the hot weather. I have always worked, summer and winter, and don't feel the worse for it."

" Many a boat, captain, has put on all steam, bound not to be beat, and never blown up ; but sometimes bilers will burst. Besides, Tom has got home ; I saw him in the street-car just a little while ago."

" Glad to hear that, Mrs. Hubbs. I declare it takes a load off my shoulders. Maybe I will go North and surprise Grace."

After concluding his late and unrelished dinner,

Captain Putnam, as was his wont, repaired to his private room. For years this had been his place of retirement, and it was in it he lived in the enjoyment of the past. To any one but himself, the place would have been too suggestive of the frailty of the tenure of human life and the mutability of human affairs to be congenial. Several portraits hung upon the wall. The most conspicuous of these was that of his deceased wife. Another was that of an only son who, in the dawn of early manhood, had been stricken with fatal disease, and breathed his last in the now vacant room, once joyous with his young and hopeful life.

By the grave of his mother his body was deposited, with tears and prayers. On the opposite side of the portrait of his wife was the sweet, fresh, young face of a daughter. No earth tomb received her body, but in the briny deep it went down with the ill-fated ship that was bearing her, all loveliness and expectation, from the old world—a happy bride.

But to the old man these were not the portraits of the dead. Wife and son and daughter were with him in the meditations of the night and in his dreams, when his head rested alone on the pillow.

In this room his family was reunited, and it was here he loved to be alone with them. Seated at his table, he took from his pocket the last letter received from Grace, and re-read it :

“ RICHLAND COTTAGE, Minnesota.

“ DEAREST PAPA,—This is such an interesting place and so enjoyable that I feel like dragging you by force out of your lonely room and carrying you up to this place, where there is such sweet, refreshing air and such hospitable people. I am having lots of fun. It has worked wonders on Mr. Hardwick; he is not

the same person. I do believe he is in love with Abby Wilmot, so don't be deluded into the belief that he wants to convert your girl into Mrs. Hardwick.

"Mrs. Wilmot is a lovely woman. Her lips seem to be in a perpetual pout for a kiss, and the way Hardwick looks at her and acts convinces me that he will never give up until he can get a kiss of his own right there, where it will do the most good. He is a dear, good man, and I must own that at first I was awfully jealous; now I am of such callous heart that I rather enjoy this masterly angling of the experienced widow. Hardwick thinks he has done some good fishing since coming here, but the premium must be awarded to Mrs. Wilmot.

"Mr. Richland has taken a great liking for Mr. Smith. Smith bears the honors of what to him is a new life with great moderation, and it is hard for me to realize that he is the quiet young book-keeper I used to see perched upon his high stool. I confess I am unable to understand how it is that Mr. Hardwick should so favor him as to keep him here. That examination of the books was all bosh. He is a splendid oarsman, and I enjoy rowing by moonlight on the lake so very much.

"Mr. and Mrs. Richland send their love, and join me in entreating you to come and spend a few weeks in this most enchanting summer home, from which I write this letter. Good-by, dear Papa,

"GRACE."

CHAPTER XII.

CAPTAIN PUTNAM MAKES A JOURNEY, AND THEN ANOTHER.

PASSING down into the yard of the St. Louis Union Depot, Captain Putnam entered pandemonium. Here were representatives of all races and tongues. On each side of a long passage trains are backed up, and the name and destination, with hour of starting, carefully posted where it would be supposed all could see and understand. But it is a queer circumstance that strangers entering one of these great depots are at once deprived of their heads ; not by any process of physical decapitation, but by temporary demoralization of the faculties. In confused words they confuse and unfortunately demoralize the not too intelligent depot assistants, and these functionaries indulge in the idea that only cranks ask questions of the kind they are called on to answer.

Undisturbed by the jostling multitude, Captain Putnam readily found his way to the Minneapolis train by the Burlington route, on the west side of the Mississippi, and in a few minutes after he had seated himself comfortably in one of the sleeping-cars, the train was slowly moving out. As was his habit, the old man took a leisurely inventory of the fellow-passengers in his car.

Opposite him he noticed a plainly but neatly-dressed lady. He liked her appearance. There was a pleasing, intelligent expression, and a face neither old nor young. He noticed that her glossy black hair was unmixed with gray, and that it was in harmony with her broad, white forehead and dark eyes. Perhaps he saw the face at its very best, from the fact that the letter she seemed to be reading was agreeable, and the sense of pleasure she felt in reading it manifested itself in her face, which the old man, with sly glances, was reading with curious pleasure; for, with all the care and all the sorrows to which he had been subjected, his heart was warm, and his admiration of the fair sex remained undiminished.

Could the reader have been privileged to peruse this letter, he would have detected the cause of satisfaction. It was from our acquaintance, Alvin Smith, and the lady was no other person than this young man's mother. This is the letter :

“ RICHLAND COTTAGE, Minnesota.

“ DEAREST MOTHER,—What I hopefully hinted in my last letter is now an accomplished fact. I have rented of Mr. Richland a cozy, ready-furnished cottage on the premises he occupies with his family. He intended it for a friend who failed to come this summer, and as it was vacant he was so considerate as to remember that I had a mother sweltering in St. Louis, and that she might just as well be here with me as not, and in fact spend the summer, for I have no idea of remaining all summer. Why I am kept here at all is what puzzles me, especially as Mr. Hardwick insists on paying my salary and expenses right along. It looks as though your daily prayer for your son has been graciously answered, for I assure you the kindness and attention bestowed on me here seem strangely inconsistent with the humble place I fill when at home.

“ Enclosed find a pass Mr. Hardwick has been kind enough to secure for you, and do not delay starting at once, for I long beyond

all things to have my darling mother here to enjoy the pleasure of this glorious retreat. When you reach Minneapolis on the St. Louis and Minneapolis train, take the Manitoba road, and stop at Wyzetta, where you will be met by your affectionate

"Son."

Why should not the lady feel pleased? Such a son is a precious possession rarely acquired. She put the letter back in her little satchel, and as she looked out of the window there was an ineffable sweetness in her face. They were crossing the Missouri, and now away up the Mississippi Valley, with countless fields of corn on either side, on they sped.

The corn-fields grow monotonous spreading out on the dead level of the broad valley. It is a relief to approach the straggling Missouri villages where at the station the motley crowd await the train. Fat black women, with a numerous progeny of pickaninnies at their heels; broad-brimmed, sallow-faced, cornsilk-bearded grangers, their cadaverous mouths reeking with tobacco-juice; damsels in picturesque groups, munching the inevitable gum, and giggling and ogling at the big, bold-faced boys standing about in no apparent hurry, and quite indifferent whether school keeps or not. These views from the car-windows serve to vary the monotony of the corn-fields. Above Keokuk (for at last they pass the borders of Missouri, make a lofty bow to the old city of Quincy on the east bank of the river, to do which they are obliged to cross a long bridge and return) the old man grows interested, for he is nearing his childhood home. On a majestic bend of the river, on the opposite side, in the distance is seen the historic town of Nauvoo. It is on an eminence just

where the Mississippi makes its most westward curve in the bend round which the train is passing. As Putnam sees the mild-faced widow looking across the river and taking in the grand view on the opposite side, he remarks,—

“An interesting place. That was the stronghold of Joe Smith and his Mormon followers. When he was there, in the full glory of his dominion, I was a young man,—or at least I felt like one, for I was more than sixteen years old, and lived on a farm only two miles back of the place. I would like to stop and see it once more.”

“You surprise me,” answered the woman. “Can that be the famous town of Nauvoo?”

“It is indeed. You can see but little of it from here, but what you see will remain in view for more than forty miles as we continue to round the great bend of the river. No more sightly spot could have been found. It all seems like a dream. I used to wander along the streets of the city of those Latter-Day Saints when all was life and expectation. Joe Smith was mayor, and under the City charter he had almost absolute power. His missionaries were scouring the cities of Europe, and succeeded in obtaining many converts to his wonderful religion. Not a few of them had money, and were attracted as much by the glowing accounts of the rising city of the Mississippi and the rich country as by the revelations made to the Lord’s Modern Prophet. Had Smith been an honest man, of course he would never have palmed off his Book of Mormon as miraculously discovered, and all that; but if he had even been a prudent man, after having succeeded in obtaining recog-

nition as a genuine prophet and saint, there is no telling what he might not have done at Nauvoo. But he was an unmitigated rogue ; success had turned his head, and he grew intolerant and licentious both in morals and in administration of the government as mayor, and as sole trustee of the Mormon Church. He and his brother became marked men, both among the honest Mormons and the people of the surrounding country. To protect himself, Smith had the brazen face to organize a small army of fifteen hundred of his most unscrupulous and devoted followers and dupes. This was too much for the plain but determined citizens of Illinois. His ‘Nauvoo Legion,’ as he called his army of adventurers and lawless men, only hastened his fall.

“ Quite unexpectedly he and his brother were surprised by the sheriff, who had a warrant for their arrest on a criminal charge, and before the Nauvoo Legion could be summoned the two brothers were carried off to jail. I had the curiosity to steal a march on my father, who with a company of masked men visited the jail, and without any trial or hearing shot the two brothers while they were in prison. Unbeknown to my father I was in the crowd and saw the pitiful brothers facing their executioners. It made a powerful impression on me, I assure you. As you know, another and shrewder Yankee succeeded Joe Smith, and under his lead the Mormons made the long overland journey to Salt Lake, and the lively flourishing town was left deserted, and never since has it been a place of any importance. There is no more sightly site for a city in America ; but in America cities don’t grow up on such sightly places. Business is dreadfully humble.

It locates itself in the low places, by the rivers and lakes, where boats can come and go, and railroads be best accommodated."

Our travellers had now reached Fort Madison, and the promontory on which stood the ancient Mormon city still loomed up in the distance, and the old man in a longing way still kept his eyes on the place of his boyhood life and experiences. It was with a sigh his vision failed to longer take in the place, while the train, drawn by tireless steed, thundered on its way. We will not follow them on the journey.

It was on the evening of the succeeding day that the train to Minnetonka, on the Manitoba Road, drew up at Wyzetta. There Mrs. Smith had the joy of embracing her son.

There was a commotion among the people at the station. One of the passengers aboard the cars just arrived remained in his seat. He was limp and helpless! Paralysis had benumbed his hands and feet, and his tongue was without its accustomed power. Helpless and voiceless, he sat in utter despair, as could be seen by his wistful face and beseeching eyes. Who could the miserable man be? The conductor of the train, who still remained aboard, examined his pockets and found a letter. Hastily he read the address, for it was in an unopened envelope.

"Miss Grace Putnam, Wyzetta, Minn." From mouth to mouth the mystery of the man and the name of the person to whom the letter was addressed was circulated, until it was heard by Alvin Smith and his mother. They rushed through the crowd and gained access to the sufferer.

"It is Captain Putnam," cried Alvin, with a shudder. His mother saw it was the old man who had occupied the sleeping-car, and was her neighbor on the journey to Minneapolis.

Tenderly they caused him to be conveyed to the hotel at Wyzetta, and at once despatched a messenger to Grace. Alvin and his mother remained with the stricken man. Fortunately, our old acquaintance, Dr. Mills, had arrived from Minneapolis on his way to Hotel St. Louis for the evening. Learning that the unfortunate man was the father of Miss Grace Putnam, the charming young lady whom he had met in the room of his patient at the hotel, he was only too willing to remain during the night with this new patient, who lay in helplessness on the couch where he had been placed. Grace was at his side at the earliest moment. Her pale face and distracted, tearless eyes told the tale of suffering and resolute composure. A greater sufferer than herself demanded her assistance, and she had exerted her will to its utmost tension to fit her for the work.

As she entered and saw her parent apparently resting and in health, she could not realize his actual condition. His eyes met hers and the anguish of the previous hours disappeared. It told her in unmistakable words to be of good cheer.

This very tenderness and expressiveness of the eye, and a certain sweetness of the face, overcame the girl, and she fell with a pathetic cry upon his bosom. It was well. The tension had been too great. Blessed tears came to her rescue, and in a little while she was prepared to take up the bitter cross of affliction.

The woman's heart of Mrs. Smith was hardly less

moved than that of the girl. While she had never met Captain Putnam previous to the meeting on the cars, and then she had not learned his name or destination, she had so often heard Alvin speak of him in such kindly language that she felt for him as though he had been a near relative. Nor had Alvin failed to mention the daughter in terms of the highest praise, and now, as the widow looked upon the comely face of the grief-stricken girl, her heart went out to her. She could have taken her in her own motherly arms and longed to console and help her, but from these the girl turned imploringly to the doctor.

Taking him out of the hearing of the suffering patient, she asked, "Doctor, is there any hope?"

"With a younger person, nature might be trusted to rally; but in one of his age it is something we dare not expect. If his constitution is vigorous, he may, to some extent, rally and linger for months, but he will not recover; at least the chances are all against him. I learn from Mr. Smith he has always worked in a business that was worrisome and arduous, and the result has been, an apparently vigorous, healthy man, but in fact a man like a vigorous-looking, hollow tree,—a green shell and nothing more. In such cases medicine is useless and physicians superfluous."

The prognostication of the young physician was correct. More experienced physicians were called, but the case proved hopeless. There was nothing to do but wait for the spirit, that seemed to have been cruelly arrested in its flight from the falling tenement and held in the ruins, to linger till the merciful hand of death should effect its release.

Hardwick had gone on an excursion to Tacoma, and would not be back for several weeks. Mrs. Smith was installed in her summer cottage, where by her modest ways and lady-like deportment she became the favorite of the Richland family. In his spirit of hospitality, Richland had procured the removal of the stricken man to a room in his own cottage, and all that love could do to make his last days comfortable was done. His wistful eyes ever followed the movements of Grace, who seldom left him. The strong man had become a helpless infant, and Grace was the mother. Much of the time his mind seemed only that of an infant, and he would laugh and cry by turns at the smallest provocation.

Dr. Mills made his daily visits to the cottage, but it was more for appearance than to be of any service. The stalwart countryman of the egg episode was also with him much of the time. Next to Grace he was the most welcome. The doctor found him familiar with disease and an adept at nursing the sick.

Once he said, "There was a great wrong done to the world, Mr. Countryman, when the people having you in charge in early life failed to discover your genius as a natural physician. Your admirable physique and magnificent nerve would have been the foundation for a physician and surgeon of the first-class. I dare say you have the nerve to cut a man's head off with as much coolness as you would decapitate a chicken for dinner."

The old man on the bed heard this remark, and to the surprise of all in the room there was a gurgling laughter heard from his lips, and his eyes twinkled with amusement.

"Were I a physician," said Countryman, "I would take the hint from such manifestations as these. That awakening of a sense of amusement in your patient is the best treatment you can devise as an aid to nature in effecting cures, when cures are possible. I would exclude medicine-bottles from the sick-room, and introduce the violin and jester, especially when the jester happens to be a doctor such as yourself, with blarney enough to administer taffy to patient and attendants, so as to develop good humor and amusement."

Time passed. Mr. Thomas Putnam and his mother finally appeared on the ground, for it was evident the sufferer could not last much longer. Tom was all tenderness to the girl, and devoted in his efforts to be of service; but it was an awkward business for him. His mother was no less attentive and kind to father and daughter, and Grace could but feel that she had never appreciated the genuine goodness of her devoted aunt.

The end came at last. It was a source of relief, for all knew his condition rendered the delay of the final summons an actual grief to the old man. He merely made his exit from the shattered ruins. The corpse was not the person who had started on the journey from St. Louis to visit his daughter. It remained for the vacated tenement to be removed. It was a mere inorganic mass of matter; the tenant that had given it interest and worth, that had animated the eye and face, was no longer there. He had journeyed into the Undiscovered Country.

CHAPTER XIII.

A LOVER ARMED WITH A STING.

ON the same day that the elder Putnam died, Thomas requested a private interview with Grace. On retirement to a room for the purpose, the following dialogue occurred :

Thomas : "Grace, it is out of place for me to renew the subject of our conversation at the time I left here last. I only renew it because I feel that now, more than ever, you are in need of one who can be in part to you at least what poor uncle was. As you already know, he died before making a will. It is necessary for administration to be taken out at once. It is necessary for the business to be wound up by one having authority. Now, that time and experience have given you a chance to reflect, I urge you to reconsider the offer I made you, and at this time open a way for me to act in such a manner that your happiness and future comfort will be secured. With one blessed word from your lips, all can be fixed and all will be well."

Grace : "Cousin, you astonish and pain me more than you can imagine. I had been encouraged by your kindness to me in my distress, in your devotion to my poor father, and by the answer I gave you, that it was as a relative you devoted yourself to our care. A word from my lips can settle nothing. Now, more than ever, I

most solemnly assure you, my poor heart must be consulted. My lips must not be false to it. They would be false should I utter the little word you at this painful time urge me to speak. As to my father's estate, I shall be glad to have you take the administration upon yourself. As I am the only heir——”

Thomas: “Grace, why will you drive me to an act of desperation? An act that will indeed go to your heart, and possibly plant a sting that will cause life-long pain?”

Grace: “Is the man who professes to love me capable of such an act?”

Thomas: “When love is changed into desperation, what will it not do?”

Grace: “Mr. Putnam, you are too old, and belong to a school in which love is not so intense as to become madness, and you will not act a madman's part. My conscience tells me that no act of my past life has been so improper as to cause me to suffer pain, when it is recalled or placed before the full gaze of the world. You have sought to win my love by a threat of exposure. You have made a mistake. I esteemed you before you made the threat. Have a care, or esteem may be changed into contempt, for the serpent that dares to prate of love with a tongue armed with a deadly sting. In heaven's name, let us now and forever end this unprofitable conversation. If you truly love me, you will shield me with your life——”

Thomas: “And in return——”

Grace: “If it were in my power to give you my heart I would do so; but, as it is not in my power, your love to me would be proved by at least remaining worthy of the love you importune me to give you.”

Thomas: "You must not, then, be any one but your own self."

Grace: "Till I can give my heart truly, I will truly remain Grace Putnam."

Thomas: "No; only one way can you remain Grace Putnam. I can and will bestow on you that honored name by marriage. If you refuse, you must surrender the name. You are not the daughter of the old man who brought you up as his child."

Grace: "Not hi—his—daughter? Do you—do—you—you—Oh, God! Yes! You will not, cannot be speaking such fearful words without knowledge. I am afraid I am beside myself. This is so sudden. His death was a sad loss; you have made me thankful for the affliction of his death. He loved me; therefore, in love he concealed from me the shame of my birth, and in his blessed home made me his own child, so far as was in his power. This was true love."

Thomas: "While your words are daggers, do not forget that the secret is still kept from the world. To it you still are, and ever will be, his daughter, on condition—"

Grace: "That I become the wife of Thomas Putnam."

Thomas: "Is the condition hard? Only think. Is not my reputation irreproachable? Is it not proof of my love that I am still willing to take you nameless, as in fact you are?"

Grace: "And if I refuse the condition, what then?"

Thomas: "Refusal is optional, but not necessary. In case of refusal, as sole heir of the late William Putnam, now deceased, and supposed to have been your father,

it will be my duty to return to St. Louis and apply for administration on the estate. That is why at this time, and with this unseemly haste——”

Grace: “Excuses are superfluous. With the loss of the name the loss of the estate is too trifling to mention. At least I have a conscience that makes no accusations against my character. If it please God to be on my side, I can bear all things better than the ignominy of voluntary marriage to a cold-blooded serpent which would in the name of love wind its slimy coils round my heart, and call me by the sacred name of wife. I am a child of sin, a waif rescued by the dear ones who became to me father and mother; tenderly reared and loved by them, I shall still be worthy of the care they bestowed upon me. Who, pray, enlightened you as to my history?”

Thomas: “Have no doubts as to the truth. My mother was there when the infant was left at the home of your mother, as infants of a certain kind are left. She kept the secret, as the family agreed to keep it under the mistaken belief that it would never become known to you. When I declared my love, even I was ignorant——”

Grace: “Return, then, to your most affectionate mother, and tell her for me that her fealty to the dead will be rewarded by the blessings of heaven. I took leave of my foster-father in that room where his last days on earth were spent. As his heir, be you the chief mourner, but do not expect me to bear you company. When the old friends ask for the daughter, have your amiable mother tell them of the betrayal of the secret trust confided to her; and as for the doubly-orphaned

child, leave her to suffer with those who at least——
But pardon me! I am talking at random. The sting has indeed penetrated to my heart."

(Grace walks the floor distractedly, and finally buries her face in her hands, as she sinks in a seat and drops her head on a table.)

Thomas (aside): "I am a brute. Yes; the very serpent she described. Why should mother betray the precious secret of the dead, to torment and crush the living? (He contemplates the girl, who is sobbing.) She is like the plant, giving forth the most exquisite odor when crushed. She hates me now, and I hate myself no less. To perdition with this devilish business! In her very distress she shines out of the gloom as a creature of heaven. So help me God! I will be her shield. She is right. The poor old man, by the misfortune that incapacitated him, unintentionally left her intended fortune in my power. Curse me if I take advantage of his misfortune. (Approaching Grace and addressing her.) Grace, you have won the battle. You have revealed yourself as a being superior to the buffets of misfortune."

Here the speech of Thomas was broken, for there stood at the closed door, with ear near the key-hole, that respectable lady of whom Thomas spoke as the revealer of the startling secret. The let-down of her son meant the possible relinquishment of the estate. His weakness shocked her, and to prevent the misfortune, she abandoned the lady-like attitude of eavesdropper, and, with well-feigned ignorance of what had been heard, opened the door and walked in. Already the mourner's weeds had been donned, and as she entered the room

there was an air of overwhelming sorrow in her face. At each side of her mouth there were lines running downward in a manner to betray a kind of down-in-the-mouth expression.

"Poor child!" she said, addressing the weeping girl, "this is a grievous blow. Providence is inscrutable, but kind. My poor brother-in-law has been called hence, and we may trust that he is in the hands of an all-merciful Father. The poor body requires our care. We must do our duty and bear it to the cemetery, where we will all be in like manner borne when our time comes. Come with me, and I will do what I can to help you prepare for the sad journey."

Grace rose from her seat, and seemingly above her normal stature, and stood facing the soul-dwarfed old lady like a spirit of vengeance. She fixed her piercing, dark eyes on her, and there they rested in silence. Thomas saw the movement and the withering look, and in spite of motherly affection he gloried in the girl and felt an inexpressible loathing for his mother. Without uttering a word, Grace left the room and returned to the couch of death, beside which Alvin stood. Her limbs trembled, and she fell in his arms, colorless and limp as the mute form of the old man.

CHAPTER XIV.

HATTIE POWELL.

WHEN one is so near the *dénouement* of a story, a decent respect for the reader requires that, unless good cause can be shown, there should be an end at once. In this case the reader is assured that a good reason exists for introducing the incidents now to be narrated. They will be found to be essential links in the chain of facts upon which the story is founded.

Some forty years ago there stood in Fort Wayne a somewhat imposing edifice known as the Methodist College. It is believed the institution long since ceased to exist, but there are hundreds of persons still living who were students within its walls.

It was for the education of both sexes, and the pious founders believed they could so guard and surround it with godly and prudent professors that the sons and daughters of the sectaries who established it could there receive an education without lacking that religious training so essential to their spiritual and eternal well-being. As a part of the institution, a young ladies' boarding-house was established in the immediate precincts of this seat of learning. This was a kind of inner sanctuary for young ladies. Study hours, the time for eating, time for retirement, time for rising, and time for prayer were carefully prescribed. Not only the *time* for eating, but

the *kind* of food was prescribed, and in all things the ruling idea was to develop on the part of the young ladies a disposition and capacity to counteract all natural impulses and make themselves perpetual sacrifices. The only difficulty on the part of the godly founders of the school was that the aforesaid young ladies were so tempted by the evil one that they were not disposed to ignore the impulses of their nature, and since they could not, under the regulations of the place, move in the natural grooves of their carnal nature, they did things that, under other circumstances, would never have been attempted.

They had a wicked appetite for pies and the luxuries that were on occasions of unusual importance placed on the table, for display rather than consumption, except in small and very select quantities. If they resorted to theft and bribery of the servants to get these things, it was because that was the only way to get them.

One of the young lady students in this boarding-house was Hattie Powell. She was the personification of fun and frolic. Her parents had died of chills and fever on Eel River when she was but ten years old, leaving her a small patrimony. It was taken charge of by her uncle, Deacon Graveman, and, as an incident, he took Hattie into the bosom of his family. In her country home in the valley of Eel River the child had led a free and usually happy life. True, she, in common with the custom of that country, lost her spirits and moped in subdued, shadow-like form during dog-days, and acquired a ravenous appetite for quinine; but aside from this she was as lively and contented as the squirrels that leaped from branch to branch among the

hickory-trees, under which she gathered the nuts in autumn.

When she appeared for the first time at her uncle's home in Wabash, she was not attractive with her saffron face and diminutive form.

Mrs. Graveman was motherly and meek. At first the child was trying to this aunt. She was liable to disappear at the most unexpected time. On one occasion the deacon was seated with his family at the supper-table,—supper promptly at 6 P.M. It was a rule that the Almighty must wait for the expected grace till his devout worshipper should see every seat at the table occupied. The chair of the small girl of saffron complexion was vacant.

"Mother," said the devout man, as he bent his cold, gray eyes on the meek woman addressed (he always spoke of her in class meeting as his "beloved companion"), "mother, where is Harriet?"

"I cannot tell, father."

"The Lord, by his providential dispensation, has made you her keeper, mother, and he will require you to give an account of your stewardship."

While the solemn deacon yet spoke the orphan appeared. For the saffron there was on her cheek the faint tinge of the dew-kissed rose, and the eye, that was erstwhile of a yellowish hue, was clear and joyous.

"Harriet," said the man of God, who was about to invoke Divine mercy, "retire at once to your room. You have broken my rule, and you must be punished. You will do without your supper, and you must read at least three chapters in the Bible, beginning at Luke x. 1."

"Yes, sir."

That night was Wednesday evening prayer-meeting, but Mrs. Graveman was too indisposed to go with the never-failing deacon. When that devout saint left, the meek wife went into the pantry, procured a bowl of milk, and placed it on the dish with the cold chicken she had taken, but failed to eat, when at table. (She lost her appetite when the faint "yes, sir," of the child was heard.) Placing on this dish a liberal cut of custard pie, and taking the dish and bowl of milk upon it in one hand and a candle in the other, she sought the attic-room where Hattie slept. She found her prostrate on the floor, sound asleep, her head resting on her thin, delicate hands, and raven, curly locks falling over her white forehead and pale cheeks.

She knelt by the sleeping orphan and offered a prayer. No words were articulated. It was one of those prayers offered in the closet of a weary and heavy-laden soul. Tears glowed on her cheeks as they coursed down the sad passage. One of them fell on the face of the sleeping child. She opened her dark eyes. They were radiant.

"Oh, auntie! such a sweet dream! I thought mother was here. She did not look sick and weak, but so bright and happy. You look ever so much as she used to, auntie."

"Yes, dear; we looked very much alike. You have just seen her, and she looked bright and happy. Do you think she could be happy if she knew her darling were naughty and disobedient?"

"Not for all the world would I make her unhappy. She never gave me a chance. She liked fun as well as

I did, and it seems to me, now that she is gone, she often laughed to keep me from crying. You know both her and father had the dreadful ague chills every other day,—one day mamma, and the next day father. When mamma's day would come, she would get up early in the morning and get father's breakfast, and have the dishes washed, and when this was done she would warm her bedclothes,—hot as the weather was,—give me directions about dinner, and while she was giving me my directions her lips would look blue and I could see her shiver; but she would laugh at the ridiculous idea of making such a fuss about having a chill, and then she would go to bed and send me out to play. The next day she would act as though nothing had happened to her, and she would get father's bed warmed and fixed for him, to take to it when the chill came on. She would joke him about the convenience of having separate days, and tell him they would wear it out after awhile. Why, auntie! Did you bring that pie and chicken up to your naughty child! How could you disobey uncle?"

"Child, eat it; never mind asking questions."

"It was so good of you, auntie; but it was too bad to put you to so much trouble. I ate my supper at Mrs. Wheeler's."

"Then it was no punishment, after all, to send you up here. I felt dreadful to see it, and couldn't rest until I could come to you. But where have you been all day? It gave me a great deal of anxiety when I found you were gone, I knew not where."

The child put her arms around her aunt's neck and caressed her.

"I deserved to be punished, so I did, to give *you* pain. Please forgive me. I was so thoughtless. I got so lonesome in this big house I wanted to get out as I used to in the country. I started to get away from the house and people. After walking on and on I found the dear old forest, and on I kept along the road till I heard the falling of water. I went to see what it was. Oh, auntie ! what a beautiful place I found. The creek came dashing down through the woods as merrily as the birds and squirrels in the trees, and all at once it came to a jumping-off place, and away it leaped down into a boiling pool. And then it went on its way just as though the tearing jump it had made hadn't hurt it a bit, if it did tear it all to pieces. It just gathered itself together and went singing on its way as if nothing had happened. It made me think of mother. I sat down and watched it, and felt as if I would like to stay always. At first the birds and squirrels seemed shy of me, but after a while they got over that, and it was such fun to see the squirrels curl their bushy tails over their backs and bark at me. I started home in good time, but as I was passing Mr. Wheeler's I saw baby in the window, and it looked so sweet I just had to go in to give it one tiny kiss. I found Mrs. Wheeler was not well, and Mr. Wheeler was just finishing her washing. Wasn't it queer to see a real gentleman rubbing out clothes over a wash-tub ? She said he had been in court nearly all day trying a case. I tried to get her to tell me what that meant, but couldn't understand her. The court, she said, was in the big old house over on the hill. They have a man on a big, high bench, and she says while he sits on it he is the court. He sits all day on

that big bench, and Mr. Wheeler and some other lawyers make speeches to him, and to some other man on a low bench, and they go on that way all day. It must be a queer life. And then when Mr. Wheeler gets through there, he comes home and helps finish the washing.

"Mrs. Wheeler says he always helped her with the washing. Well, that baby was just too cunning for anything ; and I kept it while Mrs. Wheeler got supper ready, and when it was ready, don't you believe she just made me take off my hat and stay to supper with them. She said baby would feel bad if I didn't stay. Mrs. Wheeler is an awful good woman. She said she knew mother when she was a girl. Did you know her too, auntie?"

"Yes, dear ; she is a good woman, and if there ever was a man worshipped his wife that man is John M. Wheeler. He saves her all the trouble he can, and never says an ill-natured word."

"Does he belong to the church, auntie?"

"No, Hattie ; neither he nor Mrs. Wheeler have ever been converted. Your uncle thinks his example is very bad."

"Oh, auntie ; I wouldn't have him converted for anything."

"You wicked heathen ; what do you mean?"

"Why, uncle has been converted, and if Mr. Wheeler should be, it might make him like uncle. That would make Mrs. Wheeler as unhappy as you are."

"Do you really think I am unhappy, child?"

"Don't I see it every day? I want you to walk out with me and see the beautiful place I told you about.

Mrs. Wheeler says it is Charley's Falls. May be, at the sight of it, you will enjoy it and think of mother, too. Won't you go with me, dear auntie? How very sorry I am that I gave you trouble."

"Indeed, I will go with you, my precious one. No wonder my blessed sister could laugh in the face of adversity and affliction. Her little daughter was the inspiration. She is bound to do her best to make her poor auntie happy. This time she has succeeded. God bless and keep you from harm and sorrow."

With this benediction the meek, sad-faced woman took up the dish she had brought into the room and was about to retire, but the child timidly called her back.

"Auntie," she said, "you have forgotton the three chapters in the Bible."

"No, dear; not forgotten. I cannot make the blessed word of our heavenly Father a rod of punishment. I have not forgotten."

"But, auntie, it won't be punishment when *you* read. I know it will make me think of dear mother. She used to read to me and tell me stories."

"I will be glad to read to you if you wish it; but wait till I take these things down."

With a pang of anguish the child could not fail to see, the wife of the deacon carefully gathered up the supper she had brought to the child and carried it down-stairs. The Christian woman was not only practising deceit, but practising it in the performance of an act of mercy and love. The Christian deacon had heaped this burden on her drooping shoulders in the name of the merciful, all-loving Father.

This chapter of the domestic life of the orphan is a sample of the life she led at the home of her uncle.

Hattie and her aunt became loving companions. Mrs. Graveman's own children were grown up, and they were by no means bright and shining marks. Compulsory Christianity has never been a success. The austerity of home had driven the boys to more enjoyable resorts. The saloon and card-table were never furnished with faces of the order of Deacon Graveman. The boys went to the bad, but the deacon still trusted that he would be blessed and happy in the bright land of promise, though the boys should be consigned to perdition. The mother had no such exalted notions. Her tender heart bore up for a while; and it bore up because this sweet flower from the garden of her deceased sister had been transplanted to her bosom.

It was a sad day for the orphan when the solemn cortege conveyed the inanimate body of her aunt to the cheerless cemetery on the bleak, desolate hill in the outskirts of Wabash.

In less than a year after this event, the sanctimonious deacon installed a "companion" number two in his domestic establishment.

Hattie could not find a way to the heart of this "companion" of her uncle. The uncle himself was equally unsuccessful. Heaven seemed to have so constructed her that she could get along without this organ, and just such a person was best suited to be the wife and companion of the husband she had taken to herself. With him she obtained a home and position in the church. In godliness she excelled her husband.

Home was secondary. The cause was primary. Things seen were of less importance than things unseen.

It was wonderful how Hattie had matured. She was now fourteen, and her limbs had rounded out, and her body almost all at once developed into that of a robust, vigorous young lady. The sallow face had been transformed into one of delicate marble whiteness, while under the clear skin the pulsing blood bounded with the vigor and glow of perfect health. Over her shoulders fell dark, clustering curls, of which the girl was particularly proud. More than once the new mistress of the establishment detected her standing before the glass adjusting these vain adornments of the sinful, earthy body.

One day, this fervent devotee of spiritual beauty, armed with sharp, shining shears, ordered the girl to be seated. "What do you want?" demanded the young lady, trembling for her precious curls.

"'If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out,' says our divine Master. Be seated."

The girl was so surprised and overcome that, hardly realizing what she was doing, she obeyed the stern woman, and in a trice her curls were hopelessly gone. Her hair was clipped short. But it was the last conquest of wife number two over the girl. No persuasion could ever induce Hattie to speak to her again. Silently she performed her daily duties as usual, but no effort on the part of the woman could win a word or look, save a look of undisguised hatred. Even the austere deacon felt that an outrage had been perpetrated, but he was himself no longer master of the establishment. His "companion," so fortunate in her construc-

tion in the matter of heart, was regular as clock-work in all her religious duties, and in the church she had almost supplanted the deacon.

There was no alternative but to send the girl away. She was sent to the Methodist College at Fort Wayne.

CHAPTER XV.

STOLEN STEPS.

ONLY one thing distressed Hattie when it was determined she should be sent off to school,—her hair, after the shears of the gentle “companion” of her uncle had done their work and the much-admired curls were shorn. The evenly-cut remnant of hair remaining rose up in protest. In vain the child coaxed and brushed, oiled and pressed the disturbed and ruffled shafts that once were the base of the glossy curls. They pointedly refused to succumb. They fairly snarled in response to the efforts on the part of the girl to make them lie in smooth and orderly composure on her despoiled head. In her desperation she visited her faithful friend, Mrs. Wheeler. That lady was something of an adept in the line of hair-dressing. She at once detected the possibility of heaping coals of fire on the head of the despoiler. Taking her scissors, she deftly trimmed and adjusted the projecting shafts so that their manifest disposition to disregard order was encouraged, and out of this very disorder an idea of beauty in dishevelled, glossy, black, kinky locks was eliminated and developed. The even-ended, projecting shafts, rising in bristling protest, disappeared, and out of the disorder there came forth a magnificently poised little head, crowned with the most bewitching locks, black as jet, and in the

abandonment of freedom kinking and curling into a style of beauty that altogether surpassed the original orderly display. Thick, short ringlets in jaunty abandon hung over, but did not conceal, the broad alabaster forehead and delicately-arched brows; while the brunette face seemed almost blonde in contrast with the raven ringlets. Through the brown skin of the cheeks the bloom appeared in subdued tints, harmonizing admirably with the contrasted color of hair, brows, and forehead. The thin mobile nostrils and small mouth suggested keenness of sensibility, while the firmness of the lips, and the prominent, square, but not ungraceful chin, suggested latent power and resolution. But there was, at this time, an appearance of innocence and unconsciousness in her expression and manner that evinced absolute ignorance of that strange world in embryotic existence in the inner incorporeal being of the child.

When Mrs. Wheeler had completed her loving ministration, and the child stood in delighted astonishment before the mirror, that good woman took her in her arms with motherly tenderness, not unmixed with motherly anxiety for the orphan about to be sent among strangers, and subjected to trials and temptations about which she knew nothing, and to meet which she had never been prepared.

When Hattie returned to the place misnamed "home" she found her spiritual-minded aunt in conversation with Elder Lemon, the general soliciting agent of the Fort Wayne Methodist College. Brother Lemon was a kind, liberal, broad-minded, big-hearted minister. His face at once won the heart of the girl, and his critical eye took in her beauty and unripeness at a

glance. She was to accompany him to Fort Wayne, and was instructed to get ready at once. When she went up-stairs for this purpose, Brother Lemon said to the gentle sister who was entertaining him,—

“It seems to me that is the material for a splendid woman.”

“As proud and vain as she can be, Brother Lemon. You know how hard it is to get the young to walk humbly before God. Feeling anxious to lead her to the true conception of the duty of plucking out an eye when it offends, I felt it my duty to cut off the curls that were really very handsome, and that made her wickedly vain. Her haughty spirit rose against me, and, do you believe, the evil one has inspired her to refuse to speak to me since. Oh, Brother Lemon, we who strive to do our duty and bear the cross of our Master find the burden heavy.”

“But, sister, the birds have beautiful plumage. Do you think God made a mistake in creating things of beauty and imparting to us a sense of beauty? However, curls are common, and though they may be beautiful, the possessor is not specially noticed, because many other girls are adorned in like manner; but that girl has got the best of you. That head of hair, as it now appears, is a wonderful superiority over the curls. It is so rare and becoming. Few girls could submit to the loss of their curls and come out the gainers in mere matter of personal beauty. Let us, sister, accept the handiwork of God as designed for use, and not burden ourselves with vain repining on account of the beauty with which our Father has clothed his daughters. More important is it that we strive to beautify the life so

that it will harmonize with this outward adornment of nature."

In due time the elder and Hattie were aboard the packet for Fort Wayne. All was novelty and interest to the child. Seated on deck, she watched the three packet-horses trot along the tow-path, drawing the passenger-laden packet. At the old town of La Gro, the great bridge across the Wabash loomed overhead as she passed as a thing of the most stupendous dimensions. There, too, she saw the large dam that served to feed the canal, and she was borne into the lock, and in a curious manner lifted up by the filling water on the opening of the upper gate and closing of the lower one. The elder explained everything to her, and she felt fortunate in having so kind and communicative a companion. At a lock above La Gro, while the boat was being passed through, she walked with the elder on the walls of the structure. The gatekeeper was thin, hollow-cheeked, and bloodless. His teeth even then chattered with the incipient chill. This was a familiar sight to the young lady.

Said the kind elder to him, "Do you have the chills and fever here very badly?"

"Not here," was the response; "but they shake like hell up at the ten-mile level."

The bright eye of the girl caught that of the elder, and she detected a glimmer of humor that delighted her; for the poor child had imbibed, through association with her uncle, the fallacious idea that candidates for heaven must suppress all humor and joyfulness, and elongate their faces into images of repulsive aspect.

On reaching Fort Wayne, our young lady was con-

ducted by the good elder to the boarding-house connected with the institution. As she parted with him at the door she felt that she was parting with an old friend ; but Elder Lemon was an active and, what in the West would be called a "rustling," man. His duties called him away, and the child was now in the hands of the matron of the great boarding-house. This woman did not prepossess the young lady, for in her appearance and manner she reminded her of the other woman who had shorn her darling curls. With wonderful quickness Hattie resolved to stand on her guard. No woman would ever again surprise her into submission as did the one she had such reason to remember with loathing. The introduction into the boarding-house was not under favorable auspices for the well-being of the new student.

The fifty young ladies constituting her fellow-boarders were not only strangers, but strange, to the unsophisticated girl of fifteen. Unfortunately, her room-mate was the daughter of strict religious parents, and had by the home discipline been alienated from, rather than drawn to, the elevating and refining principles that underlie and enoble Christianity.

Both girls had learned to gain the enjoyments of the young by stealth, as things forbidden and sinful, not only in the estimation of their parents, but in the sight of God. Putting the two together increased their advantages in the matter of carrying on contraband employments. Alice Ketchum, her room-mate, was at least a year older than Hattie ; her parents were abundantly provided with money, and the child was not financially neglected by the good people at home, who

felt that the guardianship of the brethren at the college would be such as to shield their daughter from the contamination of the world.

Hattie was so quick to learn that she found no difficulty with her studies. This gave her a prestige and made her a favorite with her teachers. Her style of beauty was so unique and striking that she became the observed of all observers. By degrees, she not only learned the lessons in the books of the curriculum, but a great deal that was not in the books.

Dancing was forbidden as something wicked and calculated to advance the prospering interests of Satan. Music, however, was an art to be cultivated assiduously by the girls. Their delicate fingers could be trained to play the piano, but the feet were forbidden to respond to the influence of the rhythm and harmony of the instrument.

The chapel was on the third floor of the college. Several pianos were in rooms adjoining, and the girls were encouraged to rise early in the morning and repair to them for practice. Here was a way devised by Satan to gain recruits. How nice it would be to get up a dancing-school on the sly, by repairing to this chapel early in the morning to practice on the pianos? Some of the girls had already learned the forbidden art, and could teach the others. Then why not have some of the boys? The society of girls is dull, and that of boys—oh, how delightful! So it came about that the sprightly, pretty girl of short, raven locks was initiated into the school of disobedience, and by stolen steps acquired the fascinating accomplishment of dancing. Some of the students who had graduated, and knew all

the "reports," were smuggled into the chapel to join in these forbidden exercises. Among these was Henry H. Smith. He was a young man of twenty-two, of prepossessing appearance and impressible heart.

His father had at one time been a leading tradesman of Fort Wayne, but dissipation had undermined his faculties and credit, so that at about the time Henry graduated, his father failed in business. Brought up in the morally enervating influence of a home in which servants were at his service and money at his disposal, he knew no want save that of ability to restrain his appetites. Home was no place for him, for home was the abode of austere morality, notwithstanding the private indulgences of the father, and morality included the exclusion of card-playing, dancing, and pretty much everything that the young are disposed to indulge in. When a small boy, he was a faithful attendant of the church and Sabbath-school. It was remembered that he memorized Bible passages by the chapter, and could answer all questions with extreme readiness. Later on, he found that Tom Hanna, Ed —, and other young bloods belonging to the most wealthy and influential families of Fort Wayne, looked on the Sabbath-school as a good-goody kind of an institution, well enough for women and children, but hardly the thing for big boys. He gradually dropped out of the habit of attending Sabbath-school and church, and it was in vain for his parents to attempt to compel him to attend. He was too old for that sort of thing. With his chums he would linger late at night over the card-table, and not unfrequently indulge in "drinks." In order of time the drinks degenerated into drunks, and the high-

toned, moral element of Fort Wayne society sighed that Harry Smith was in a bad way, and forbade their sons and daughters to associate with him. His grandfather had left him a small sum of three or four thousand dollars, and on coming of age this was placed at his disposal. It was a matter of surprise that it was not at once squandered, but being of a business turn of mind he, for a time, braced up, and with influences of the kind that might have been exerted, it is possible his reform would have been permanent, but the influences were unfortunate. His old boon companions were assiduous in their attentions. The drinks were pressed upon him, and the good people who did not drink prayed to God for the heathen and the general hastening of the millennium, but when they met Harry on the street they had for him no encouraging word and no friendly invitation to visit their homes. The influence on their dear ones at home would be deleterious, and possibly it would. To the saloon no invitation was required so long as his money held out. The old habit regained its hold, and the old chums hung upon him like barnacles on a ship. This was the young man, among others, who gained the *entrée* of the morning dancing-school in the chapel of the Methodist College.

Hattie had become proficient in the art of deception, and it was for the fun of it, as much as anything else, that she encouraged the advancements of this young profligate. She did not, in fact, know that he was a profligate, for he was really in love with her,—earnest, deep love,—love that sobered and transported him into an element of nobility of feeling and purpose. His

treatment of her was tender and gentlemanly, as she understood those terms, but her understanding of them was confused. Not only did she dance with him at the chapel, but, thanks to the kind-hearted cook in her boarding-house, she managed to rise when her guardians supposed she was sleeping the sleep of the just, and steal out of the house by the way of the kitchen, and attend social dances and public balls in the company of this admirer. There was a fascination in this successful evasion of the stern guardians of the place, and a still greater fascination in the young man who worshipped her in the most devoted way imaginable, a way that thrilled her own heart with a responsive sentiment. The upshot was that on one bright morning in June, when the girl was only a little more than seventeen years of age, she was missing in the classes of the college, and the gay young Smith was likewise missing.

By the mysterious means that mad love devises to evade the law, the girl and young scapegrace stole into matrimony, as Hattie had stolen all the sweets of enjoyment she had ever experienced. Harry had still some means at his disposal, and, allured by the glowing accounts from Minnesota, the girl-wife and her devoted husband sought a home on the south middle branch of the Zumbro, in that aspiring North State.

CHAPTER XVI.

AT WASIOJA.

AN overland trip by stage of something over one hundred and twenty-five miles westward from La Crosse, tended to develop in Smith and his young wife an aptitude to appreciate the royal welcome extended to them when they alighted from the stage at the Wasioja hotel, by the proprietor, Curt Moses.

The person who has failed to meet and from the acquaintance of Curt Moses has failed to form the acquaintance of one of the most accomplished of gentlemen in appearance and address. At the time he received our weary travellers he was about thirty-five years of age, and in the meridian of his enterprise of speculation in Wasioja town-lots. It had proved a great financial success. In person Moses was slender and lean. While nature had been niggardly in the matter of flesh and bone, she had been unusually prodigal in the supply of nerve in his composition. The most observable trait of this unusually noticeable man was a cat-like liteness in movement, and, on acquaintance, he was found to possess a corresponding mental quality that enabled him to ransack all the hidden places in the consciousness of people in whose affairs he might be interested, without exciting the least suspicion on the part of the person in question that his mental establishment had been

ransacked. His keen, and apparently kindly, hazel eye was wonderfully fascinating as it peered upon you from a thin face all aglow with interest in your personal welfare. Habituated as he was to rough frontier life, he retained and displayed all the scrupulousness of dress that is supposed to specially characterize the well-to-do gentleman of society. His voice was soft and low, and lulled his new acquaintances into the gentle repose of confidence. He had seen a great deal of the world, and experienced many of the ups and downs of it. But if dame Nature had been niggardly in the matter of flesh and bone in his composition, she had been far more parsimonious in providing those organs which are supposed to be the seat of truth and honesty. To have subjected him to punishment for his moral delinquencies would have been as unmerciful as the punishment of my lady's pug-pup that may have purloined her best hat and devoured the birds and trimmings on it. But this wolf-man had accomplished the masterly feat of so adjusting himself in the habiliment of the scriptural sheep that the unsuspecting stranger would have taken him for an innocent estray from the home fold, subject in his unshepherd wanderings in this prairie wilderness to imminent perils.

Curt Moses was the chief proprietor of the town-site of Wasioja, a very prepossessing-looking little village on the border of a forest fringing one of the numerous branches of the Zumbro River, in a part of Southern Minnesota which, at the time here referred to, was chiefly in a state of nature.

On the evening of the arrival of our travellers, after they had partaken of supper (strangely sumptuous for

the place), and retired to a commodious room lavishly and expensively furnished, they were visited by their most attentive host.

"You are fortunate," he said, in that lullaby tone of his, "in reaching Wasioja in your search for a new home in the West. I would advise you not to be in a hurry about locating. We will try to make you at home here while you look round. The woods are just swarming with lying town-site snides, who lie awake of nights studying how to take in strangers. Hope you will like Wasioja. Only an infant of two or three years' growth. Not much of a place yet, but we try to make people feel at home with us. Of course, I am hardly the person to brag up the place; 'twould be a good deal like boasting of myself; for Wasioja seems a part of myself. When I came to the country, Southern Minnesota was an uninhabited wild. I had about all of it to pick from, and this was my choice, and is still my first love. I would not have stuck my stakes here if it had not been an A No. 1 site for a town, in my opinion."

Unfolding a well-worn map of Minnesota, he proceeded: "Here you see the great land-grant railroad extending westward from Winona by the way of Rochester, Owatonna, and St. Peter, through the richest part of the State, and finally will let up on the Pacific coast. These towns I have named are made points on the road by the Act of Congress granting the land. You notice that Wasioja is on an air-line with these places, and can't be left out on that account without making a crooked and longer line. Here is Rice Lake, twelve miles west of us,—a splendid body of water,—and here

is the branch of the Zumbro flowing from it, and at this place doing what I take it you have been doing."

"I don't understand you," said Smith, with a puzzled look.

"I will explain," answered the smiling host: "here from the loved home of the lake comes the winsome little river, with the water-lilies decking her bosom, and down among the green meadows that skirt her limpid form she glides in maiden loveliness; while here, in solitary meditations and tranquil peace, wends the forest-shaded Zumbro till he reaches this place, where, for the first time he hears the sweet, murmuring voice of the beautiful daughter of the lake, and is enamored. They naturally take to each other, and here, on the site of Wasioja, are married."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mrs. Smith, her pretty face suffused with a blush.

"You are the kind of people that are all the time making homes in Minnesota,—the kind to make her a State."

The eyes of the husband and wife met, and there was a vision of home and happiness; while in the mellow, benevolent eye of Moses arose the delightful vision of money in the possession of these guests around whom he was weaving his spider-like web.

"But," continued the deft spider, "marriage brings its responsibilities. When the daughter of the lake brought to the Zumbro her dowry of water, Mr. Zumbro at once assumed an importance and possessed a capacity for usefulness you will appreciate when you see the dam Mr. Atherton is building to utilize this magnificent power in running a flour-mill. You will further under-

stand the wealth of this dower when you come to discover that this is the last available water-power of the upper Zumbro, and that you will travel fifty miles west, and at least forty miles south or north, before finding another. Here, too, you find the last stone-supply as you travel westward, seventy-five miles to Mankato. These are only a few of the great advantages of this place. These advantages, without abundant capital, would do little good. We have looked out for that.

"We have been careful to induce responsible capitalists to take hold with us. Mr. Atherton is already on the ground, with ample means to complete a first-class mill. We have a number of other important enterprises on the list of good things which we are confident will materialize. We are not developing a Jonah's gourd. We are making haste slowly, but surely. We want investors with us to take a look for themselves before they give us their money for Wasioja property. You know it is mighty easy for one to get rid of money."

The next day our adventurers looked round. On the surface appearances were as deceptive as the master conjurer who had created them. There was an air of business and enterprise so apparently real and genuine that the stranger would not even have suspected that what he saw was but the illusive phantasm of this shrewdest and cunningest of deceivers. His big store opposite his hotel was doing a rushing business; his substantial stone building, erected and used for his bank, was thronged during banking-hours with intelligent-looking men depositing their money over his black walnut counter, and intrusting him with authority to

purchase real property or make loans on mortgage security. The fine church, on a picturesque, suburban elevation, was a standing advertisement that at least in this place religion had its appropriate sanctuary. On another suburban hill rose the massive stone walls of the Northwestern College. The *Wasioja Gazette* appeared weekly with fresh news of new and promising business enterprises in the rising metropolis of the upper Zumbro. Only once did Charley Blaisdell, the publisher, fall into disrepute in the estimation of the great man who bore the burden of the expense of publishing the *Gazette*; it was well-nigh a fatal disaster both to the publisher and patron. It all resulted from the inexcusable act on the part of the editor of inserting in the local columns of the *Gazette* the fact that, on the fourth of July, sprightly Jack Frost had put in an appearance. Fortunately, the omnipresent Moses discovered this rash blunder in time to suppress the edition, so that the numerous friends in the East, to whom the bulk of the weekly edition was usually sent, failed to receive at least one number of the *Gazette*.

Nearly all these improvements and business enterprises were developed and continued with money furnished by Moses. It was his boast that what he put in, in productive business or public improvements, would be the making of Wasioja and the honest people who had invested their money in the place.

"I always feel," he said to Smith, as he was showing him round, "I always feel that, even if considered in a business way, the best plan to build myself up is to do it in such a way that I can be a support to my friends and neighbors. By that means I acquire a prop that

will be most reliable. When my edifice serves the purpose of upholding the structure of my neighbor, my neighbor will have an interest in preserving mine for his own advantage."

But this expenditure of money was no depletion of the funds of this genius of modern public spirit. What he expended was but a meagre fraction of what he had obtained from the unfortunate people who had listened to his charming lullaby. When these dupes were finally aroused from repose on his bosom and called on him for an accounting, they found that the investments he had made for them had invariably produced feathers for *his* nest, and that all the birds of promise he turned over to them had been—denuded.

Moses was one of the pioneers in a vocation now quite common in Western cities. It consists in advertising one's self as a real estate and "financial agent." There is so much in the name with which you dub an employment. As "financial agent" one could receive money for investment in real property, and as "real estate agent" he could undertake to sell land for the owner, and the owner might be his silent partner owning real property which he would be glad to sell for five thousand dollars, but which he can sell to this "financial agent" for ten thousand ; having, as you see, a snug sum to divide with the "financial agent." Of course, there must be the proverbial honesty expected to prevail among thieves, and which does in fact prevail, with wonderful punctilio.

This financial agent also intuitively grasped the idea of syndicates. Only get fifteen or twenty men to club together, and make up a joint fund, and put it in the

hands of the financial agent to invest in real estate, when real estate is on a booming rise. These little sums which each member of the syndicate puts in are too small to be looked after by the confiding dupe who makes the contribution, but in the aggregate they swell the income of the financial agent amazingly.

The faith of this class of real estate and financial agents in the credulity and gullibility of mankind is not misplaced. In a population of sixty millions there are at least the thousands who can be depended on, and so the wolf-man and the man-spider wax wealthy.

In the evening, while seated in the hotel parlor with our acquaintances and other guests who had lately arrived, the genial Moses, in the course of conversation, said, "One has to keep his eye peeled in this new country, if he expects to keep out of the grip of unscrupulous speculators who are prowling round seeking whom to devour. Now there is that glib Frank Mantor who has been cackling over the egg of a town-site he has named after himself,—Mantorville,—four miles down the river from here. I looked over the place before locating here. My partner, Squire Waterman, at that time owned the entire place. He had the sense to see that it was so situated that the high bluffs to the south and east of it made it inaccessible by a railroad, and was glad to give it away for a mere song, and take an interest in Wasioja with me, where the bluffs kindly bow their heads to a level with the plain, and invite the iron horse to cross the river and make his way up the north side of the river, where nature has already provided an almost straight and level road-bed. Mantor knows as well as I know that Mantorville, as a town-site, is a bad egg; but

he is a fox, and what he don't know in the art of deception is not worth knowing. He has his stool-pigeons out, and they are finely trained."

"Mr. Moses," broke in Mrs. Smith, "I hate to expose my ignorance, but I confess I don't exactly understand the meaning of 'stool-pigeon.' Will you oblige me by explaining?"

"With pleasure. You know the pigeon is the wildest and most cautious of birds. They fly in flocks of thousands and tens of thousands. They are decidedly palatable when well fattened, and it is quite an object to capture them. This is done by means of a net about fifteen feet wide and forty feet long."

"I have seen fish taken out of the Wabash with nets dragged in the water, but how you can drag one through the air and take a flock of pigeons is what I can't understand."

"The most simple affair in the world, Mrs. Smith, when you understand the stool-pigeon. The great thing is to get the pigeons on to the ground so that you can net them. One side of the net is fastened on the ground, and the other side is secured to a strong rope about five hundred feet long, one end of which is fastened to a stake about five feet high, and the other end passes into a bough-house,—that is, a little lodge carefully covered with straw or corn-fodder in which the operator conceals himself. The net is set by drawing this rope back and fastening it down, when the side of the net is secured on the ground so that the birds will not notice it. It is held in that position by an apparatus, which will release it when the operator in the bough-house pulls the rope, and when released is caused by another simple con-

trivance to rise directly upward, carrying the side of the net with it, and then spreading it out upon the ground. On that part of the ground which the net will cover when sprung, a quantity of wheat or corn is scattered for "bait." Just outside the limits of this baited ground, on a low sweep that is worked by a long slender cord extending into the bough-house, is a 'stool-pigeon' fastened by the feet on its perch. Now, when the operator at the bough-house sees a flock approaching, he throws up, in the direction of the net, one of the pigeons he has with him in the bough-house, to the leg of which is fastened a long, light string. When this bird reaches the limit of the string it gradually settles down in the manner usual when alighting. As the flock approaches, another of these birds is thrown up, and by this time the attention of the flock has been arrested, and the situation becomes interesting. Suppose yourself in that bough-house. There, in mid-air, hovers a flock of ten thousand wild pigeons, as free apparently as the air on which they are poised. But, you see, they are not free. The man in the bough-house now works his stool-pigeon, and the poor prisoner there on his perch does the work. He is raised up and let down, and as he is let down he works his wings so naturally that the wild ones up there in the flock are fooled. Round and round they circle, now right over your head, and anon at a distance from you ; but ever hovering nearer and nearer the fatal bait they now discover. In a few moments the great flock is on the ground, and at the net the stronger ones have monopolized that part covered with the grain. They are going for it with all their might. When they get their fill

their weaker companions of the flock can take their chances at the second table. But what is that awful thing that leaps in air right where they are feasting? Panic-stricken and lost in the meshes of the net, some eight or ten dozen of these monopolists flutter helplessly. I should have remarked that the eyes of our stool-pigeon had been carefully closed, as well as those of the flyers, by sewing together the lids with a fine needle and silk thread. Now, Mrs. Smith, you understand the meaning of stool-pigeon. As you advance in years and experience you will discover that the masses of mankind are symbolized by that flock of wild pigeons. Look out for the stool-pigeons! Look out for the human fowler's net!"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BRUTAL FATHER.

“The Sun, that brief December day,
Rose cheerless over hills of gray,
And, darkly circled, showed at noon
A sadder light than waning moon.”

LONGFELLOW.

SOME seven miles to the southwest of Wasioja, Smith found a partially improved farm that appeared to come up to his ideas of what would suit him for a home. It was purchased, and here in a small house on the place the young couple, for the first time, entered upon the matter-of-fact business of housekeeping. Neighbors were few and homes primitive, but, since the few were on an equality in the matter of conveniences, there was actual relish of this new life.

But Smith was hampered for money. Enthusiastic faith in Wasioja had led him to exchange all he could possibly spare with the accommodating Moses for some of the choice lots in his extensive town-site, at prices that quite depleted his funds. This lack of money, however, was only a temporary matter. In a few months Wasioja lots would be sold at immense profit, and money would be abundant. This was the cheerful lullaby song of Moses, while Smith reposed on his bosom. Alas! it was not to be. The “baseless fabric of this vision” was swept away by the merciless wing of fatal

fact. His bird of promise sat perched at his threshold —denuded. Moses held the golden feathers. No railroad accepted the invitation of the bowing bluffs to cross the Zumbro at Wasioja. Beautiful still are the hills that await the tramp of the busy feet of trade at Wasioja, and fair is the lily-gemmed bosom of the limpid daughter of the lake, and lovingly murmurs the Zumbro where he spreads for her the bridal-bed, but for Smith there came no glittering gold,—only the dim memory of a dream; only the consciousness that he was at the bottom of fortune's ladder.

All might still have gone well, had he only known there hovered on his way a foe more subtle by far than the wolf-man at Wasioja; a spoiler who also sang his lullaby, and not only depleted the purse of his victim but maddened his brain, and wove his web so secretly and so well about the unsuspecting will that it became as helpless, apparently, as yonder pigeon fluttering in the fowler's net. Had he only known! Alas, and alas! had he only known—only known!

The charm of the new life might have continued longer, had not the disappointment of his financial venture tended to sour his disposition and dampen his ardor in the effort of making farming a success. The little village of Ashland was only little more than a mile from his farm. It was one of the many dying towns started for speculation, and abandoned by all men of enterprise. The saloon remained in this corpse of the once living village. Here Smith was wont to lounge in the company of dissipated young men. The old drink habit was gradually re-established. The drink-madness possessed him.

In the following spring, the birth of a daughter brought sorrow rather than joy to the distressed little household. To be born in poverty was unpropitious, but not the worst ; to be the child of poverty and of a father drink-mad, that was the fearful fate of the new being that nestled on the bosom of the mother, who, in the agony of despair, pressed it to her heart. The summer passed, but to the Smith family it ripened no harvest. Autumn came, but with it no fruit for the family of the drink-mad man. The farm had been mortgaged and the proceeds of the mortgage were exhausted. The return of the staggering husband from Ashland was now always awaited with terror by the mother of the child that still she pressed in despair to her heart, and in her love wondered with strange wonder how God could be *all love*, and leave the helpless charge in her arms, the prey of the monster she once looked for and greeted with a devotion she had imagined nothing could alienate. Now his coming was the coming of doom. More than once had this incarnation of the fell spirit of evil laid violent hands on her. Not only had he knocked her down, but on one occasion he did this while she held the child in her arms, and, as she fell, a heavy table was thrown upon it by the infuriated madman, which so crushed its foot that it became necessary to send for a physician, and have it attended to by him. The scar remained, a lasting memorial of the brutality of the father.

Brutality of the *father* is hardly the expression to make. The *father* was not cruel. The child, then only three or four months old, was a jewel he prized above all treasures. From the time of its birth, he

had, when not under the influence of drink, tenderly cared for it and the patient mother. To hold the little one in his arms and watch in its dark, unfathomable eyes for the first scintillation of dawning intelligence was the most exquisite enjoyment this distraught mortal ever experienced. When the little one was six weeks old, he was sure she knew him when he entered the room. At three months of age, it was so far advanced in intelligence that, on his appearance, its soft, sweet face would be transformed into a smile of welcome so unmistakable and charming that the father was transported with a love as unselfish and pure as the mother's.

No; the *father* was not cruel. The cruelty was that of the irresponsible madman of whom the public tolerates the creation in the saloon, the club-room, and everywhere in the world of enlightened statesmanship,—tolerates, because as yet no remedy has been discovered that is practical, the more the shame. The cruelty is in that insidious vice that stealthily grows upon the unwary youth and fastens upon his being with its invisible fangs before he is aware, and drags him down, step by step, till he is transformed into that Thing there in the ruined home, gazing on the bleeding wife and the quivering limb of that mutilated infant,—fit spectacle to dissolve common devils into tears.

That sickening wound upon the foot of the child was a thousand times more painful to the father than to the infant, when he became sober. His anguish was so intense that his wife indulged the vain hope that this bitter experience would be the means of his reclamation. She was disappointed. His dire sense of grief and shame seemed to drive him to desperation. He brooded

over it so much that he could not sleep, and in his perturbed state, regardless of all restraining influences, he went or rather was drawn, by his drink-madness, to the haunts of his dissipating companions at Ashland, where, in the forgetfulness of inebriation, he found that relief which is moral and mental suicide.

While in this demented state, one evening in December, he returned to his wrecked home. Entering the humble abode, his wife saw in him only a savage brute, destitute of the brutal instinct that leads the brute to defend its offspring and its dam. His bloodshot eyes fairly glared with demoniac madness, for at the saloon he had been taunted with the mean epithet of wife-beater. Something the unfortunate woman said to him, he, in his distorted imagination, construed into an offence, and with the malignity of an enraged serpent he rushed upon her, but she dodged him, and, stumbling against something in the floor, he fell prostrate, and for a moment seemed stunned. Without time for reflection, a bold resolve inspired the wife. A clothes-line was observed lying where the brute fell. In an instant it was seized, and with the strength of a tigress defending her young, she bound the stupefied wretch before he was able to arouse himself. Having done this, she hurriedly seized her child and fled to the home of a neighbor. With shame and grief she there told her story, and the neighbor was persuaded to seek this madman and care for him till restored to reason, and explain the situation. The neighbor found the discomfited wretch sunk in the slumber that sometimes succeeds the mad frenzy of intoxication. He felt for him with unexpected keenness as he looked upon his bloated face and

heard his heavy breathing, for he remembered and esteemed him as an intelligent, genial gentleman. All that long December night he sat by the fireside, and it was not till late in the morning the inebriate opened his bleared eyes and stared about him with curious effort to take in the situation. He seemed in a confused way to recall the incidents of the previous evening. The cord, still on his limbs, reminded him of the humiliating experience through which he had passed.

"Unbind me," he muttered.

"Is it safe to do so, Mr. Smith?"

"Where in the hell is my wife and child?"

"Safe."

"Not safe by a d—d sight, after she has served me this infernal trick."

"Come, come, Mr. Smith; you have been playing the mischief long enough. When you were a raving madman, what could your wife have done to save herself, and you too, but bind the madman? Few women would have had the pluck, and I am glad to believe few women would have been driven to the necessity. Here! let me help you. You were fortunate to have a wife capable of taking care of you when you couldn't take care of yourself. After she had cared for you, she came with the child to my house and sent me here to tell you that when the gentleman, Mr. Smith, gets home to protect her from the madman, she will be glad to return."

"Never shall that woman come back to my house. The child I will have, if I die for it; but the woman that put these cords on my hands shall never have a chance to do it again."

Now that he was released, the not yet sobered semblance of a man, with dogged stubbornness, bent his steps in the direction of Ashland, where there were also persons bearing the semblance of men who will join this human monstrosity in another carousal, regardless of consequences. But to their disappointment, this semblance of a man declines to drink with them. He took a drink alone. He was moody and cross.

The snow lay in heavy drifts upon the earth, except where the groves sheltered it. The roads were only traversed by sleighs that had made a beaten track past the little house of the neighbor to which Mrs. Smith had escaped. Low clouds were drifting in the sky, threatening a storm.

The neighbor had gone for a load of wood in his distant timber lot. His wife and Mrs. Smith were partaking of lunch in a small room in the rear, used as kitchen and dining-room. The infant slumbered in quiet unconsciousness in a crib in the front room. The wind had subsided, but the black clouds cast their dark shadow over the household. It seemed as if night had come prematurely.

A sudden scream from the child aroused the two women. Hastening to where they had left it asleep, the form of its father was seen rushing out of the door with the infant in his arms. Quickly he bore it to the sleigh that stood in the road, and, with a crack of his whip and a mad yell of defiance, he was away. A demon held the lines and the child. Down the road the cutter flew, drawn by a horse goaded to his utmost speed by this semblance of a man; this creation of the saloon and the social drink; this modern beast of prey that prowls

into the drawing-room and is arrayed in a fashionable dress suit ; that grovels in the tenement and is arrayed in rags. The Winchester rifle and Derringer pistol are aimed in vain at this fleshless monster. The lion and tiger are disappearing as civilization advances into their domain ; the serpent that crawls in the path of the unwary is driven from its secret haunts and destroyed ; but this modern creation of a refined and enlightened age but multiplies and gathers strength and ferocity, as prosperity and luxury develop in the path of this civilization.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A FOSTER-MOTHER.

WHEN Smith reached Ashland on the morning of his release, and renewed the inner man with the choice potations sold at the bar of the saloon, his spirits revived, and he was prepared for *any* venture or desperate movement. The kind neighbor who had released him was unable to keep to himself the fact that Smith had been downed and bound by his doughty wife, and it was not a great while after he had passed through the village on the way to his timber lot, before the *coterie* of good fellows, loitering about the saloon, were kind enough to banter the discomfited husband about the domestic experiences of the night before. This stung him beyond measure, and in one sense sobered him,—that is, it aroused the most virulent spirit of revenge, and created a determination to execute vengeance in a way that would be most keenly felt by the offending mother and wife. He gritted his teeth figuratively, but held his tongue. The passion of revenge gave him control of his faculties sufficiently to enable him to consummate his fell purpose.

One of his chums owned a good-bottomed, fast-trotting horse and a cutter, and Smith challenged him to trade them for his breaking-team. A trade was effected, and Smith was provided with the horse and cutter.

Driving back to the seat of his late discomfiture, he stopped there long enough to ferret out of his trunk a wig that had, in the days of his harum-scarum adventures in Fort Wayne, served a useful purpose, and which he yet retained as a memento of the olden days of dissipation. This he adjusted carefully over his natural locks, and by that means he was given all the appearance in the world of a middle-aged man of iron-gray hair. His bottle had already been filled at the saloon with the wherewithal to keep up his inspiration, but in his madness he knew that he must indulge in moderation if he would succeed in wreaking the vengeance he meditated. He also took the precaution to fill a nursing-bottle with milk.

The reader has already been advised as to his next proceeding. His purpose was to get out of the State with the child in the most expeditious way. What should be done after that he did not seem to care. He drove rapidly to the east, for the direct road south was over a bleak, flat, uninhabited prairie, and the road would not be traversable through the snow; the travel in that direction was exceedingly limited, though it was only forty miles to the Iowa line. At Rochester he had his horse fed, and informing the landlady that the mother of the child was dead, and that he was carrying the infant to a relative in Iowa, she did all in her power to give it necessary attention. Travelling all night, regardless of the storm that was drifting the snow in dangerous quantities, he reached Decorah, Iowa, in the morning. He had a tale to tell the landlady at the hotel in this place, and the child, exhausted and sick, was taken in charge by her. Here he remained all day.

He was already sober enough to realize the blunder he had made and the wrong he had perpetrated ; but it was too late now, he thought, to undo the mischief. The child could not be taken back, for it was already sick and failing. On the second day he saw a *La Crosse Daily*, and in it a startling telegram, as follows :

“ MANTORVILLE, Minn.

“ There was a startling sensation at the little village of Ashland day before yesterday. H. H. Smith, living near that place, had an altercation with his wife, in the course of which she got the best of him, and actually bound him hand and foot, after which she fled with her infant, only six months old, to the dwelling of a neighbor. While she was there with her child, the husband, in his desperation, drove to the house, rushed in, seized and carried off the child. Nothing since has been heard of the miscreant. He has, doubtless, in his drunken state, wandered off, and the probabilities are he will never again be seen in this neighborhood, for the saddest circumstance of all is the fact that the mother, in her distracted and evidently crazed state, wandered onto the prairie, and was lost in the storm that was then setting in. Had she remained on the main road she would have been found ; but now, after exposure in the bleak winter storm for the past two days, there can be no doubt but that she perished. It would not be safe for her murderer to be found in that locality.”

Folding the paper with a shudder, he sank, in utter despair, upon a seat. He did not dare disclose his identity nor that of the child. So long had he depended on stimulants that now he felt his only escape was to take a drink. He did so, and then another. He wandered out, and when in the seclusion of a suburban grove removed his wig. Finding, as he wandered listlessly along the street, that a company of volunteers just recruited were on the point of starting for the place of rendezvous, he promptly tendered his services, and

was accepted by the recruiting officer, though not at that time formally sworn in, as there was not then time to do so. He gave his name as Henry Hardwick, but did not go further and add—Smith. Within an hour after he was arrayed in the uniform of the army, and on his way with the other recruits to Keokuk, Iowa. Hard it was to suppress the anguish of his awakened conscience. He managed by drinking to keep up a show of resolution and manhood, but by the time he reached his destination it was found necessary to place him in hospital. There he sank into the delirium of brain-fever. Fortunately he fell in the hands of the quartermaster, who was convalescent, and who saw the condition of the unfortunate volunteer. Medicine failed to do him any good. The delirium was succeeded by a state of helpless prostration of body and mind. He lay as one dead, and the surgeon was so sure that he was past all hope that he reported him as dead. He was actually about to be removed to the repository of the dead, and would have been, had not the convalescent quartermaster observed that life was not extinct, and taken it upon himself to try and save the young man. His efforts were successful, but Smith was so prostrated and enfeebled that he was rejected when he offered himself to be sworn in. The quartermaster still stood by his friend.

"Can you write a decent hand?" asked this official of him. "I am greatly in need of clerical help."

"I am your man," was the answer, and at once *Henry Hardwick* was installed as a clerk in the office of Quartermaster Putnam. He made his newly-found preserver and friend profoundly thankful, for he was

an industrious and rapid accountant and book-keeper, thanks to the training and experience he had had in his father's store. The two became intimate friends.

"Strange," said the quartermaster, a few days after Hardwick had been inducted into his office, "strange, I don't hear from my wife. The last letter she wrote announced the sudden death, by croup, of our poor baby. You know I told you I couldn't get away to attend the funeral. Not a word from her since. Halloo! here comes my mail; it has been delayed a long time. Here is her letter at last."

Reading the letter, he ejaculated, "By Jove! That is quick work, and well done, too. Just read there, Hardwick," and he handed him the letter.

"DECORAH, Iowa, 1863.

"DEAR HUSBAND,—I am glad to write that I am well, and that, by a strange interposition of Providence, a child, almost identical in appearance and age with our darling Grace, has fallen into my hands, and now looks up with the sweetest smile into my face. A middle-aged man came to the hotel with the poor darling. It was sick, and its mother dead. In some unaccountable way this man, who was the father, disappeared. All search for him failed, and it is believed he committed suicide in some place not yet discovered, for he was dreadfully despondent. Mrs. Warner, of the hotel, knowing of the death of our darling (she only died the day before), came to me and begged me to take and nurse the wee sick infant. I could not refuse. It livened up at once, and is now well and contented. Poor dear! It is not conscious of the mother under the sod, or of the father who *may* be dead, or a demented wanderer. Falling into my hands in this way, I feel that God has sent the child to comfort me, and my heart seems to respond to the—what shall I call it? It seems to me I can almost hear the voice of the mother urging me to be a mother to her infant. Have you objections to adopting it? I already call the darling by the name of our departed babe."

Smith could read no more. He mustered all the resolution in his power to restrain his feelings.

"Adopt the child by all means, captain. I am strangely affected by reading this letter. It does, indeed, look a great deal like special providence. Captain, do you believe in God?"

"My wife does, and for her sake I try to ; but sometimes it is hard work to catch on when one can't see nor feel that there is any person within reach or hearing. Words are too vague to furnish leverage or fulcrum. I am not learned in the deep things of divinity, but it seems to me the depths of theology are only shallow puddles that have no connection with any living fountain of real truth. Do you believe in God, Hardwick?"

"I am compelled to believe. No doubt much of what we call religion is but the result of ignorance, and ignorance is the parent of superstition ; but the fact that the universal experience of our race in realizing, when one gets to the end of his tether, that our possibilities are so contracted and unsatisfactory as to seem a mockery, if man is really the highest order of existing intelligence, leads me, and leads all reasonable persons, to believe that a higher order of intelligence exists. When that belief forces itself on our reason, there is no trouble in apprehending the existence of God. But the very limitations of our human intelligence compel us to look to God in faith, rather than with knowledge of his personality and attributes. This is the highest order of natural religion, and when we get beyond our depth, and troubles seem to be overwhelming us, this faith is augmented and men pray who never prayed before. Here," taking up an old newspaper, "here is the

President's Thanksgiving Proclamation of last October. Take this passage : ' No human council hath devised, nor hath any mortal hand worked out these things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath, nevertheless, remembered mercy.'

" There, captain, is the voice of one who has been face to face with giant despair, and day after day struggled to keep above the surging waves of destruction,—not personal destruction, but destruction of the nation. We realize that our successes have been the fruit of his great mental labors and personal wisdom, backed by the soldiery. While we realize this, we discover the effect upon the mind of Honest Old Abe : he who was at one time a scoffer, a mere politician and droll humorist,—honest, nevertheless,—stands in the van of the world's greatest men, but is humble as a child in the presence of this invisible Being we call—God. In his solemn, humble utterance, we have the voice of a nation baptized in human blood, shed because of wrong-doing. Wrong-doing would have continued but for this baptism ; wrong-doing submerged us in the whelming wave of threatened destruction as a nation. *He who inflicts a wrong plants in his own bosom the seed of retribution.* We may obtain mercy, but not *exemption* from the consequences of the wrong we have perpetrated. The Supreme Intelligence moves not by exceptional but by general laws. They are perfect as He is perfect ; and while we groan in the human hell into which we have precipitated ourselves by our wrong-doing, we are bound to acknowledge Divine justice, and, indeed, realize the necessity of the sufferings we undergo."

"Do you believe in eternal punishment?"

"If a wrong is so grievous that it can never be righted, then can the conscience never be released from the hell into which the wrong has plunged the perpetrator. I do not speak of future but present punishment; punishment that results from the consciousness of the wrong. Well is it that this punishment is not postponed. Were this the case, the earth would be transformed into the exclusive habitation of demons. When our educators make it their business to cultivate in the mind of youth the sense of present retribution for present wrong, and present reward for present moral victory over temptation, we may hope for a better and stronger people."

As the young man proceeded, his eye kindled, and in his manner there was such manifest feeling, that the captain did not need to ask him if from the inmost recesses of his heart came the knowledge of sorrow and suffering he so fervently and feelingly depicted.

"Beg pardon, captain, for the obtrusion of my views upon your attention. You must observe that my sickness has left me a little nervous and fidgety. I will be more myself when strength is fully restored. You know we were talking of that baby so miraculously placed on the tender bosom where the departed one had nestled. Let us, captain, indulge in the delusion—if so it be—that the hand of God brought about this result. I feel a strange interest in the little waif. As I was saying, I am not superstitious, but I have a premonition that, in the person of this infant, you have a blessing upon your home. The generous affection of your wife for it, draws her near to me in a way I cannot

explain. In taking it to her breast she somehow takes me to her heart, and for all you have so generously done for—me, captain,—and for this——”

“Come, young man, I am afraid that spell of sickness has left your nerves in a bad condition. Were you a woman I would call this an attack of hysterics. You need a stimulant.”

Hardwick had sunk into his chair, overcome by his feelings.

Opening his desk, the captain took out a flask and poured out a glass of liquor. “Take this,” he said to Hardwick. “There are times when a stimulant will save a spell of sickness. I worked too hard to get you on your feet to have you down with a relapse.”

“Please excuse me, captain. You are very kind; but not that,—not that! Once I would have taken it, but the time has gone by. How often have we heard the Bible words, ‘Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the cup; at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder,’ and how little we thought what it really meant. *It is when the serpent has actually bitten, and when this adder has inflicted its horrible sting, that we realize the force of it.*”

“Well, well; I have always indulged, and have never been drunk in my life.”

“I once thought I could indulge with impunity, for I saw a great many doing so. Unfortunately for a boy or young man, it is an experiment. You came through safe. I failed. That makes all the difference in the world. What young man can tell whether he will fail or not? You must excuse me, captain.”

"Yes, yes ; we all have our weaknesses. No doubt it will be best for *you* to let it alone."

"Oh, how many lives would be saved, could all young men know as surely as I now know that it is the only safe thing to do."

CHAPTER XIX.

LOVE THAT WAS A SPARK FROM THE ALTAR OF GOD.

THE same mail that brought the captain his letter, brought also a package of papers. Captain Putnam left Hardwick alone in the office, after the conversation we have given. Eagerly, but with dread, the wretched man scanned the papers for further news concerning his wife. In one of them, the *Wasioja Gazette*, he found this :

"The sensation in the neighboring village of Ashland has in a great measure subsided. It has now been more than a week since the kidnapping of his own child by Henry H. Smith, and the disappearance of his wife. For the latter, all search has been fruitless. There is a bare possibility that the desperate husband relented and received his wife as she followed on foot, and, to escape the obloquy of his misdeeds, she was persuaded to go with him to some quiet retreat till the feeling should subside, or else she sleeps the sleep that knows no waking in her winding-sheet of snows; or, possibly, her body became food for hungry wolves. Such was the severity of the storm and the intensity of the cold that set in soon after she disappeared, she could not by any manner of means survive, unless taken into the shelter of some dwelling. The entire neighborhood has been searched, and in vain, for the missing woman.

"Nor has the search for the kidnapper been more successful. The afternoon was so dark, and the air so full of driving snow, that no one saw the retreating madman. That he could escape unseen is not surprising, in view of the newness and unsettled condition of the Ashland country and the blinding storm. The

little house, where a short time ago the husband and wife and little babe were sheltered, looks desolate enough now. A gloom hangs over it that affects the visitor more than would be imagined."

"Yes; cruelly murdered! No blood is shed, but the stab was no less fatal," murmured Hardwick. "'In her winding-sheet of snow.' Cold, icy lips that were so sweet, and that so often pressed lovingly those of her murderer. God! I shall go distracted! that white face will ever haunt me. Yet, I must struggle to live in this burning hell,—live for the darling that has found a home on the bosom of a new mother. For that God be thanked. Never shall the ears of the dear one hear the music of its own mother's sweet voice. The new mother will be the only one she will ever know. Never shall she know that her father lives. The Harry Smith that was her father has forever disappeared. But for her the refugee shall toil; for her he will live. My nerves shall be of iron and my will a rock, something still to save me from distraction."

When Captain Putnam returned to his office, he was surprised to find Hardwick at work and in such an apparently tranquil mood. He was constrained to think he had overestimated the troubles that seemed to have unmanned him. He noticed that Hardwick always watched for letters from Mrs. Putnam with as much interest as he himself felt. It became a matter of common understanding that the letter, when received, should be read to Hardwick, so far as it related to the child.

Captain Putnam found his affairs greatly systematized under the careful management of his new clerk. In a few months Hardwick found opportunity to make

favorable contracts for army supplies, and with reluctance resigned his position under his kind benefactor. Such were his abilities as a business man that, at the close of the war, he was already in good circumstances. He had made St. Louis his headquarters.

Captain Putnam had not been so fortunate. He had not been able to indulge in those practices so common in the supply department on the part of quartermasters, by which, under the thin guise of contracts for supplies, they were able to command heavy dividends out of the profits of government contractors. His sense of duty and honesty restrained him, and some of his more expert fellow-officers looked on him as a failure.

When the war was over and he returned to the quiet of his home, he was really poor, for, owing to the enormous rise in property and the necessaries of life through the inflation of our depreciated currency, he had not been able to save anything out of his salary. It was with mingled gratitude and misgiving he handed his wife the following letter he had received from Mr. Hardwick :

“ST. LOUIS, December 21, 186—.

“MY DEAR CAPTAIN,—As Christmas is approaching, I am bound to keep up the good old custom of making presents. But, alas! I am so unfortunate as to have no family or relatives on whom to bestow the gifts. All day I have been thinking of the sweet dove of consolation that descended upon your sorrow-stricken wife when her infant was taken away. I herewith enclose you a check for five hundred dollars, which I want you to use as will best advance the little one’s joy on Christmas, and, as that will probably be by seeing the faces of brother and sister, and papa and mamma bright and happy, so use it that that result will be accomplished.

“Now for business. I am in want of your help. My business has outgrown my capacity to attend to it. I am greatly in need

of an honest, industrious man to assist me. I can guarantee you at least three thousand dollars per year as a salary, and if my enterprises pan out as I have reason to expect, the salary will be more than this. I will be at the trouble to provide you a home for yourself and family in this city.

"Do you know, captain, I feel at a loss to find words to express the disappointment I should feel, if, for any reason, this offer of mine should be declined. Do not hesitate to accept it. This is the place for you to come. It is the great business centre of the South and West.

"Yours affectionately,
"HENRY HARDWICK."

"What do you think of it, wife?"

"Your good name, William, is, after all, the best passport."

"Your good act, darling, in caring for our little Grace, was the key that unlocked the heart of that strange, sad man. It almost seems as though that little act of yours transformed you into an angel, in his estimation. But we will go. Do not fear to trust Henry Hardwick. I have tried him, and if nature ever produced a nobleman, it produced one when he was born."

The opening for Captain Putnam was most opportune. It was at a time when business was at a low ebb. The private and public energies of both sections of the country had, for more than four years, been directed in the single channel of producing those things which were required for the prosecution of the great civil war. Now that the war was over, it became necessary to readjust manufactories and business to the normal state of peace. Money was exceedingly plenty, but it was in depreciated currency. In January, 1865, it at one time required two dollars and thirty-three cents of this

currency to purchase one dollar in gold. The national indebtedness exceeded three billions of dollars. The difficult problem of reconstruction of the States late in rebellion remained to be solved, and confidence in the ability of the nation to meet its liabilities honestly and fully was entertained by but few. It was at this time that men of sagacity laid the foundation of independent fortunes. Hardwick was one of these. His profits in government contracts had been heavy, and when he saw that the rebellion had collapsed and the Union was saved beyond peradventure, he invested all he could raise in government bonds when the currency and bonds were at the greatest discount. He borrowed money and invested it in the same manner.

It may be conjectured that Hardwick looked with inexpressible interest for the arrival of the family of Captain Putnam. He hardly dared to trust himself to meet the child of which he alone knew the parentage. The mother of this little one had been, with the refinement of cruelty, murdered by its father. Never could he escape the sight of the ghastly spectacle of the frozen lips and accusing, white face of that mother, wrapped in the winding-sheet of snow. Never could he teach that child to lisp the dear name "father" to him. If he struggled with the energy and power of Hercules, it was not in expectation of overcoming. He would live and die with that white face and those mute, cold lips haunting his soul. How could the eyes that had so long been tormented with this vision of horror rest upon the innocent face of the little child of its mother's murderer?

"See it, I must!" he exclaimed to himself, on the

day of the arrival of the family. And yet when he reached the dwelling into which Captain Putnam had settled, his heart failed him. He passed the place and walked on, fearing to meet the one on whom he doted with all the ardor he once loved the girl at Fort Wayne. Passionless love now ; love that was the spark from the altar of God, that neutralized and even glorified the hell-flames in which he writhed. Slowly he retraced his steps ; steps almost impossible to take with legs so weak and trembling.

"Hardwick !" exclaimed the captain, as he met him at the door, "do you know I do not feel right till I get you into my snug little nest and show you the old bird and her little ones. Come right in."

He found a nest indeed. Although but one day in the new home, home was there. The family brought it with them ; it was in their faces, in their words, in their actions and deportment.

But the child. Heaven be praised ! Here is the darling, fresh as the morning and happy as the lark carolling in the sky. And there are the curling raven locks of the mother, and the eye, the face ! Shyly she glances in his strangely fascinated face ; with a coy, bashful step she advances to him at the suggestion of the pleased mother, for she had learned long ago the interest her guest took in this sweet child, doubly dear to her as the strangely substituted one for the cherub now in the choir of heaven. Men of rough fibre cannot enter into the feelings of mothers of religious faith, in relation to the little ones separated from them by death. The faith that reanimates these departed ones with life and immortality is only capable of realization

when the faith is based on the idea of the fatherhood of the infinite spirit and its real kinship to every human being, and the fact of this kinship developing the rational belief that it renders the child as impervious to the shaft of death (that simply affects the material part) as is the spirit of the heavenly Father.

The coldly calculating man who judges of the value of things by the *avoirdupois* and fineness of quality—what it will bring in Federal money—is not capable of entering into the Christian mother's feelings, and it is not surprising, for the power of spiritual discernment on his part has become dormant.

Tenderly the unknown father takes Grace on his knee, and with lips parched with unquenchable thirst, impresses a kiss on her rose-tinted cheek. In his enraptured gaze all things disappear, save this living face animated with the soul of that ghastly one even now in mute, everlasting silence, haunting him as she lies in the winding-sheet of snow.

With a superhuman effort he composed himself and held the little one in his lap. She took to him from that hour, and no wonder; for almost daily his steps were directed to this home, and seldom did he depart without leaving some token of his regard.

CHAPTER XX.

SOFTLY THE SPIRIT OF THE NORTH WIND DREW THE COVERLET OF SNOW OVER HER, AND IN HER WHITE COUCH LULLED HER TO SLEEP.

WHEN Hattie Smith rushed out of the house in pursuit of the stolen child, her mind was distracted by the sudden and terrible bereavement. She knew her husband must be under the influence of liquor, and therefore madly reckless. She clung to the hope that possibly he would relent and return, and that she would meet him. This wild, vain hope impelled her forward. It became a single and all-controlling sentiment, and on she ran. The country was wild and unsettled. By following the road directly eastward she would, in the course of five or six miles, reach an older settlement, and would be able to have access to houses on the road, but the wretched woman, in her dazed state, took a road that veered to the south. It led into an uninhabited prairie wilderness. Miles might be traversed over flat, desolate prairie and no habitation reached.

Time, space, weariness had no effect on the mind of the mother. "He will repent and come back. I must meet them, and be with the poor little one before it perishes." The snow began to fall. Quietly and in great flakes it came after a time, and rapidly it filled her narrow and constantly disappearing route, disap-

pearing under the falling snow. Her heart chilled with despair. The wind finally rose and hurled the drifting snow in her face, and blocked her further progress. Nature could endure no more, and she sank faint, and with an uncontrollable sense of sleep.

She awoke in a strange place. She heard an unintelligible language and looked in foreign faces. The tea-kettle sang on the cooking-stove, and children walked in subdued silence over the floor. She tried to speak, but her voice was feeble and so strange that it frightened her. She felt at her side for the precious babe, and a realization of the loss of it returned with all its horror. She screamed for help, and called on the kind-faced woman who had come to her on her first alarm ; but the woman shook her head. She could not understand. She was a German, and knew no English. The settlement was exclusively German, and consisted of only two or three families, separated by a wide stretch of unoccupied prairie from Ashland. Even in summer there was little communication of the few German settlers of the place with the country to the north. They were in a different county.

Mrs. Smith slowly regained strength, and for more than a week was unable to be up. She could understand enough of the language and signs of her new acquaintances to learn who and where they were. Eagerly she sought for information, and at last obtained the *Wasioja Gazette* containing the account the reader has seen of the kidnapping of her child, and of the mysterious disappearance of the entire family. She was therefore compelled to abandon all hopes of the return of her husband and child. The fact of her

being found in the immediate vicinity of his house by Henry Schwab, her present entertainer, was related to her. Fortunately for her, she had seized a heavy wrap at the time she started, and when she finally fell, exhausted and chilled, in the snow, she held it about her head and enfolded her hands in it, so that the drifting snow covered her in this condition, but happily leaving an unconfined portion of the cape in view. It was this cape, seen after the storm had subsided by Henry Schwab, that led to her discovery. Softly the spirit of the north wind drew the coverlet of snow over her, and in her white couch lulled her to sleep. Thus shielded from the frost and storm, she was found in painless stupor by the German, and taken into his house, where prudent care was exercised to restore her to her self. Though chilled to the marrow, no part of the body was frosted except the feet, and they were so carefully dressed with snow, and afterwards kept from exposure to heat or air, that no serious results followed.

When the history of the afflicted woman became fully known to the rescuers, they opened their hearts to her and did all in their power to assuage her grief. Strangers as they were, the disconsolate woman appreciated their efforts, and, with a determination to show her appreciation, struggled to compose her mind and be of service to them. Mrs. Schwab was young and sprightly, and the two women grew mutually interested in each other, and spent the long winter hours in the pleasant vocation of teaching each other their respective languages. Much did this employment help Mrs. Smith in becoming reconciled to her bereavement.

Mr. Schwab had seen enough of the bleak north to

satisfy him. He had made his settlement at this place in the enchanting month of June, when the great prairie was all abloom with flowers, and the luxuriant grass indicated a rich soil. The selection could not have been more unfortunate, for the land was so far from timber and so isolated from all settlements that it was like getting out of the world. Germans generally have the knack of getting the best of the government land, and even in this case Schwab would have been all right had he been patient enough to wait for developments. At this time the home he had selected on the great flat prairie is the finest part of the State, and the village of Blooming Prairie, on the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad, is in the immediate vicinity of Schwab's isolated home. He had friends in St. Louis who had migrated to this country with him, and their letters were so encouraging, and so pressing for him to join them, that he and his wife had determined to do so in the spring. So much had they become attached to the deserted and wronged wife and mother, who had so strangely become their guest, that they treated her as one of the family, and urged her to abandon a country where the associations were so sad, and go with them to the more hospitable climate of St. Louis, assuring her they would not let her suffer while they had anything themselves.

Hattie Smith felt that there was nothing to induce her to return to Ashland, or to open communication with any one there. Anxiously had she watched the papers for any tidings of the recreant husband and the stolen child, but nothing appeared to give her any encouragement or hope. The little one, less than six

months old, could not have survived the exposure to which it had been murderously subjected. Its death was the prelude of endless separation from her husband, should he be alive. The providence that had cast her new life in the hands of these generous Germans was accepted by Hattie. The attention she bestowed on the two young children of her benefactor, and the assistance she was able to render the parents in many ways, so bound her to them, that it was as one family they journeyed to the city of St. Louis, and in a snug cottage entered upon housekeeping in that "City of Mounds."

Here was born to her a son,—Alvin. He was only a year younger than the dear one who had been taken from her by a hand more cruelly relentless than that of death. She found in this second child an incentive to live and struggle.

This story would be too protracted for the modern reader should the experiences of Mrs. Smith be continued. While the family with whom she made her home befriended her all they could, the head of it failed to find at St. Louis a place for success. He found employment, but he found boon companions who brought with them from Germany many convivial habits which do not seem to favor those who indulge in them in the matter of getting along. Something in American atmosphere or American beer upsets all calculations on the part of those who imagine that, because beer and the saloon were harmless in the Old World, they are equally so in the New.

Mrs. Schwab was driven to the fascinating vapors of the wash-tub, while her husband, with full purse, of a Saturday evening repaired to the saloon to have his good

time, which good time would last till Monday, when he repaired to his work for another week, to earn enough to have another good time on Saturday night and Sunday. Mrs. Smith gradually drifted into the same employment that enabled Mrs. Schwab to maintain herself and family.

She resolutely adhered, however, to the determination to preserve the refinements in herself that would make her attractive to her son when he should become a man. If she spent the day over the wash-tub, she spent the evening over books and papers. The little boy could not know his mother was unhappy, for she cultivated for his sake a pleasant face and voice. What products more rare and blessed? The efforts she put forth gave her strength and consolation. The boy was to her a source of never-failing joy. What mother and son became may be judged by the reader, who now finds them in the little summer cottage by Lake Minnetonka.

CHAPTER XXI.

HAPPY FACES.

WHILE Grace reclined, sobbing and faint, in the arms of Alvin Smith, Mr. Hardwick, who had just returned from Tacoma, entered. Seeing him, Grace rallied her temporarily prostrated forces and met him with the beseeching inquiry,—

“Dear Mr. Hardwick, tell me truly, am I only the foster-child of Captain Putnam?”

“My poor child,” he answered, receiving the weeping girl in his protecting arms, “who has been telling you these things?”

“Thomas Putnam.”

“May the curse of——; but no, not on my worst enemy. It is true. He told you the truth!”

Disengaging herself from the strangely weak arms that seemed no longer able to support her, Grace crossed the room to where the remains of her foster-father reposed. Uncovering the untroubled face of the dead, she knelt beside the pulseless form, sobbing with uncontrollable anguish, “Only dumb clay! He had *his* full share of sorrow. He is at rest. Glad am I you do not live to suffer with your——your——” Rising with a cry that thrilled the hearts of Hardwick and Alvin, she exclaimed, “He is my father; I cannot give him up!”

Hardwick stood by in speechless distraction. How he longed to tell her the truth ; but he could not. His soul revolted at the bare suggestion of revealing to her the dreadful fact that the one who had so long hovered near her with guardian watchfulness and love was the murderer of her mother !

Turning to Alvin, he said, with tremulous voice, " Try to comfort her."

Unresistingly she was led by the young man out of the house of death, out into the sunlight of God. Gladly would he have spoken words of comfort, but he felt too keenly the cause she had for the grief. On the two walked together under the maples, till they reached the cottage where his mother resided.

" Mother," said the son, as they entered, " Grace has suffered a great sorrow. I have brought her to you."

" Mrs. Smith," said the girl, with an effort to compose herself, " I have no right to enter your cottage under false pretences. If you receive me, it must be for what I am,—a nameless—worse than nameless——"

" Come, child, I do not understand you. I only know you are a sister in distress. One broken down in watching at the death-bed of a father."

" No, no ; not a father. I have been deceived. I am nameless. But it was cruel to dispel so suddenly the delusion. Why could not he have waited till the grief for the loss of the one I supposed was my father had been a little less oppressive and crushing. The thought of what I was but a little while ago, and what I am now, chills me to the very marrow."

She actually shuddered. She grew faint, and was only able to reach a bed in the adjoining room by the

aid of Mrs. Smith. There she reposed in silence, save that ever and anon a sigh escaped her.

Looking into her face, so pale and so beautiful, Mrs. Smith thought of one who might possibly be a wandering outcast; wandering somewhere—ah! somewhere. How very small is this planet, and yet how large when one's child is somewhere on it and you know not, never can know where? Bending in tearful sympathy over the prostrate sufferer, she impressed a mother's kiss on the bloodless lips.

"How generous of you, Mrs. Smith, to bestow sympathy and tears on one so unworthy."

"Unworthy, child! Bring together all the treasures of gold and precious stones of earth and cast them in the scales, and you would outweigh them. Oh, Grace, I must cry with you. Do you know that I once had such a sweet, sweet babe. All in the twinkling of an eye it was seized and carried off—forever."

"*Not forever!*" These startling words were uttered by Hardwick, who by an irresistible impulse had followed Grace to the cottage.

At first he stood without, but finally looked in at the open door. The setting sun cast a bright light on the face of Mrs. Smith, and she stood unmistakably revealed—his wife. But before this revelation, with inexpressible surprise, he had heard her repeating the story of the stolen babe. The sound of that voice rolled back in an instant two decades of years. With a bound the wife was in the husband's arms.

"Not forever! Did you say, not forever? Show her to me, and never more will I cease to praise Almighty God!"

"Can you pardon the awful crime I perpetrated?"

At this instant Alvin entered. Finding his mother in the arms of the staid and decorous Hardwick was a startling display of a new departure in her manner of life. He was shocked.

"What does this mean, Mr. Hardwick?"

"Hardwick!" exclaimed the woman. "Are you Mr. Hardwick, Alvin's employer?"

"Well, mother," said Alvin, angrily, "one would think you would at least wait for an introduction."

Mrs. Smith gently disengaged herself, and, taking Alvin by the hand, said with proud joy, "My son, permit me to introduce you to your father, Mr. Henry Hardwick—Smith."

The young man looked incredulously in the face of Hardwick, but before he could recover command of speech, Hardwick had gone to the side of Grace, now on her feet fully restored and keenly interested in the remarkable disclosures being made in this particular Smith family.

"Grace," he said, with a return of the quiet, serious air to which she was accustomed, "you have never known me to be lacking in propriety; you will not, therefore, consider the strange request I am about to make unreasonable or improper. Will you please remove the shoe from your left foot?" Restraining the perturbation that made her heart flutter and throb uneasily, the young lady complied with the request. "Now," continued Hardwick, "have the kindness, without the least hesitation, to remove the hose." She looked protestingly in his face, but there was a solemn peremptoriness in that expression of his that admitted

of no declination on her part. Alvin was about to retire, but Hardwick restrained him. Grace removed the hose, and not only displayed a shapely bare foot, but a conspicuous scar upon it.

Here was a revelation indeed. Mrs. Smith remembered the evil days in the Minnesota home. The reeling, demented husband ; and that wound on the foot of her infant, inflicted by the madman. Her mind was staggered as that bloated maniac with the mad yell, rushing out into the winter storm with the stolen infant, was recalled in all his horrid malignity, and as now she looked upon the same person clothed and in his right mind, pointing his finger at the tell-tale record upon the bare foot of her babe. All seemed the mere phantasm of a dream. She stood in speechless wonder, as Hardwick falteringly spoke to Grace.

“Grace, is it in your power——”

Before he could proceed further, Mrs. Smith held the astonished girl in her arms. “My own darling, lost babe ! My own darling Eva.” In her ecstasy of joy she extended an arm to Hardwick, and drew him to her side, pressing the long-lost husband and child to her bosom. Alvin looked on this astounding proceeding in bewilderment, which was noticed by the quick and delighted eyes of Grace, who had finally gathered her bewildered thoughts and realized the situation. Disengaging herself from the arm of her newly-found mother, she went to the young man, and with a look of the sweetest tenderness took him by the hand, but in a moment her arms stole softly round his neck, and the impassioned lips of the brother and sister met.

“Come, brother,” said the sister. “In our new

relation I shall be very proud of you. Come; I want to show you to a lady friend of mine." With steps so buoyant that she hardly seemed to tread the earth, she led him out where, on a rustic seat under a maple, she found Josephine. That young lady had heard the sad truth that Grace was but a nameless beggar. It need not be said that this sudden appearance of the disarticulated branch of the Putnam family, in seemingly high spirits, surprised and disgusted her, especially in view of the further noticeable fact that she walked so much like a royal queen, holding the arm of Alvin Smith.

"Can it be," thought Josephine, "that, out of pity for the unfortunate girl, he has proposed to take her under his wing, and she has accepted? Such disregard of feeling for the dead! I should not have expected it of the girl." Seeing Alvin in his particularly happy mood, with the bright-faced Grace on his arm, sent a sudden pang to her heart.

"Congratulate us!" exclaimed the saucy-looking spright on the arm of Alvin.

"Isn't this sudden and remarkable?" with a perceptible cold shadow on her usually sunshiny face, responded Josephine.

"Very," said Grace. "A Minnetonka Surprise Party!" With this enigmatical laconism, the marvelously happy girl withdrew her hand from the arm of her brother, and left him to Josephine.

"Do you blame me for loving her, Josephine?"

Josephine was silent, and the shadow on her face was of the winter.

"We have made a most wonderful discovery. She has a real father and mother and brother, and I a father

and sister ! Mr. Hardwick has found a wife and a son. Do you wonder we are beside ourselves under such circumstances ? Only think ! Grace is my sister, and Mr. Hardwick is my own father. I have no other news of importance this time.” He had found room on the rustic seat beside Josephine, who looked incredulous.

“ It’s all plain, sober fact, Josephine. Mother is wild with delight, and——”

Josephine turned her charming blue eyes upon the speaker, and read in his open, animated face the verification of his astonishing story. Her keen, heaven-tinted eye read more. It was the tablet of his heart. As she read, the shadow disappeared from her maidenly face, and she sat in silent tranquillity. A moment before a stifling sensation had unnerved and prostrated her. It was when Grace, all joy and confidence, hung on the arm of Alvin, and he, with unmistakable glances of love, met her sweet smile. Now that nightmare had been dispelled, and she had read aright the tablet of Alvin’s heart.

“ Do you ever write poetry, Mr. Smith ?”

“ Not when I am in full possession of my faculties. Would you believe it,” he asked, as he looked into the heavenly eyes that rested so contentedly upon him, “ would you believe it ? Once, in a delightful dream, I actually wrote a sonnet to—whom do you imagine ?”

“ And would you believe,” softly answered the girl, nestling close to his side there under the friendly maple, “ would you believe that while you dreamed and wrote, I left my body sound asleep in bed, and in spirit stood by your side and read distinctly what you wrote ?”

While she spoke, the arm of the young man, not with apparent objection on the part of the maiden, was around her waist.

"I am prepared for any revelation in this enchanted spot," said Alvin. "Some blessed spirit of the beautiful Minnetonka hovers in this, its chosen haunt, and inspires our hearts with the sweet melody of love. Dearest Josephine, that ministering spirit inspires me now."

He drew the girl more closely to his full, bounding heart, and she gazed with supreme contentment into the infinite glory of those dark eyes. Two souls mingled in one. The silence was broken by the utterance of Alvin,—

"So shall the mystic sonnet of our dream be the living song of our united lives."

EPILOGUE.

OUR domestic drama, culminating in the Minnetonka Surprise Party, properly closes here; but the author indulges the hope that the spectator will linger till the curtain is raised once more, that he may enjoy a final glimpse of the persons in whom it is fondly trusted he has become interested,—persons, the author would fain have the spectator believe, who are verities, and not mere phantoms of the imagination. That this fact may be realized, the curtain is once more raised.

The scene is at the same enchanting summer-home of the Richlands, where, two years ago, we left Alvin Smith and Josephine in the enjoyment of that one moment of supreme bliss vouchsafed to our race.

The hospitable table is spread for mid-day lunch under our familiar maples. Observe our host at the head of the table, and our hostess at his right, their genial faces glowing with that rare beauty which the spiritualizing autumn of life so richly imparts. Alvin Smith, the favorite son-in-law of the host, is at his right. That is a superb, manly face of his, and who can blame the contented Josephine for having suffered that sudden stifling sensation we witnessed a couple of years ago, when the poor girl imagined Grace had captured him. There, next to Josephine, observe that substantial, contented-looking man, with iron-gray hair and benevolent, impressive face, so different from that of the

remorseful one of our old acquaintance,—Hardwick,—that it is only by noting the wonderfully-charming matron at his side that we can understand the cause of the transformation. “Tell me, darling,” he said to her a few days after her reunion with him, “how is it that your hair retains its original color and gloss, and your face reveals no trace of suffering, and is even more lovely—if that were possible—than when, in the olden days of reckless youth, we first met?”

“Here,” she replied, taking the hand of her son, “here is the living spring that burst forth in the dreadful desert of my life, about which there was formed an oasis for me to dwell in and be happy in his love and devotion.”

But Grace! joyous prototype of her idolized mother; her we saw when the curtain first rose, and on her our eyes will now longest and most admiringly linger, for she is simply the blessedest little woman that embellishes the earth. If you doubt it, ask our old, but not very familiar acquaintance, that same doctor who was so fond of flowers, especially when left in a sick-room at the Hotel St. Louis by a young lady with dark eyes and raven hair. That doctor never gave up the pursuit of that maiden till she became his adored wife. Grace sometimes wonders what might have been her fate had the love-stricken Alvin proposed and been accepted before he met Josephine, and she had married her brother. The thought makes her shudder. She is now confident that the doctor is the only man she ever loved. Let us catch the drift of the conversation.

“Yes,” remarked Mr. Richland, “I have always made home the central object of my life. Home is not

only in theory, but in fact, the only place in which to form men and women of the kind required for a republican government. Home is itself a miniature republic when the parents govern themselves, and by their example teach their children self-restraint and self-government. I have been reading Bulwer,—please hand me the book, Ruth ; thank you. Now, I will request my daughter, Mrs. Wilmot (who in her own character is the best illustration of my author's ideal), to read this passage from *Pelham*, for in it is the answer I would make in reply to the flattering remarks about our summer cottage on this lake."

With that peculiar graciousness which endeared her to her parents and friends, Mrs. Wilmot took the book and read aloud.

After this communication there was a short pause. "What a beautiful place this is!" said I, with great enthusiasm. Lord Glenmorris was pleased with the compliment, simple as it was.

"Yes," said he, "it is ; and I have made it still more so than you have yet been able to perceive."

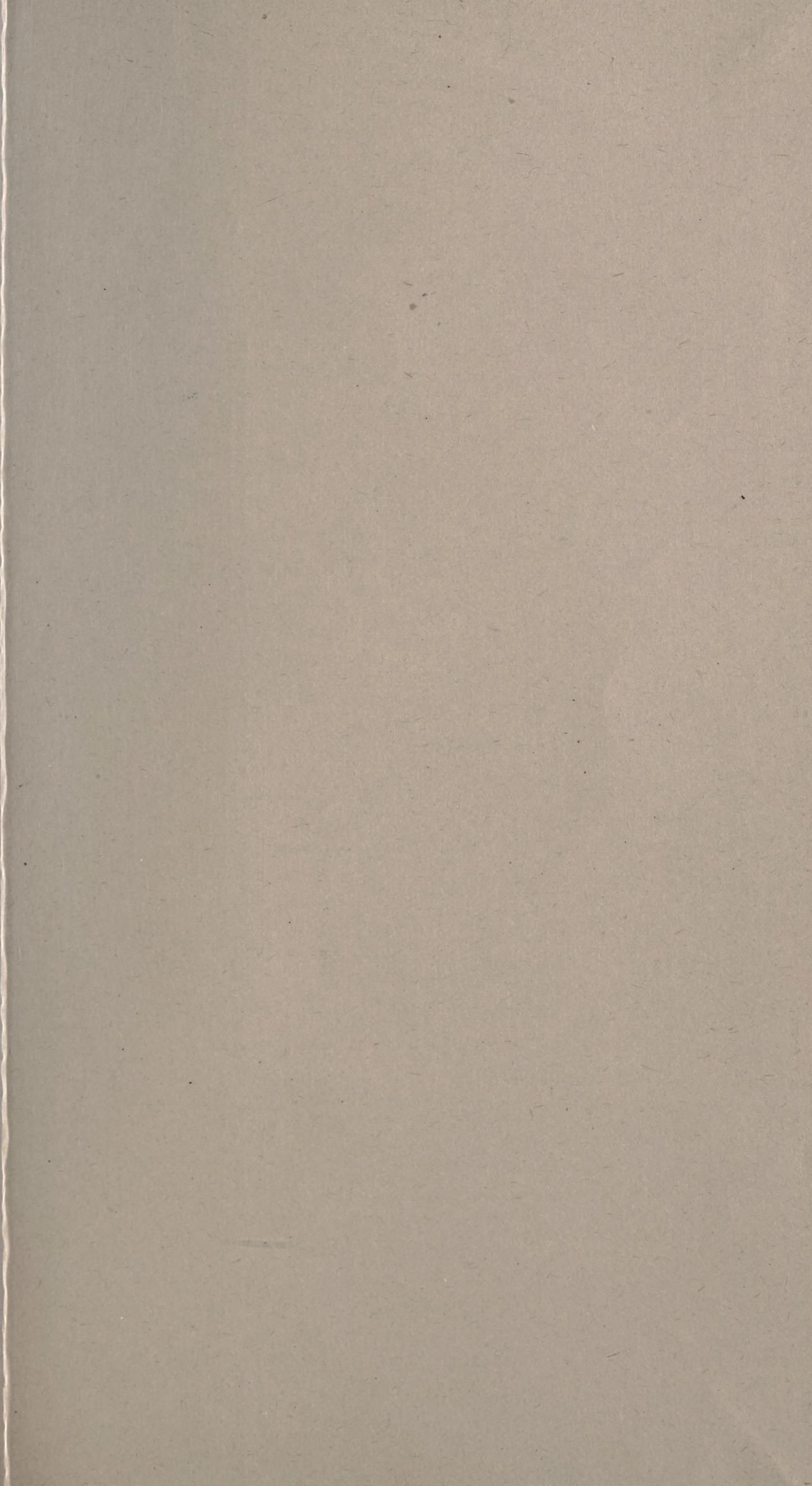
"You have been planting, probably, on the other side of the park?"

"No," said my uncle, smiling ; "Nature had done everything for this spot when I came to it but one ; and the addition of that one ornament is the only real triumph which art ever can achieve."

"What is it?" asked I. "Oh, I know—water."

"You are mistaken," answered Lord Glenmorris ; "it is the ornament of—*happy faces!*"

FINIS.



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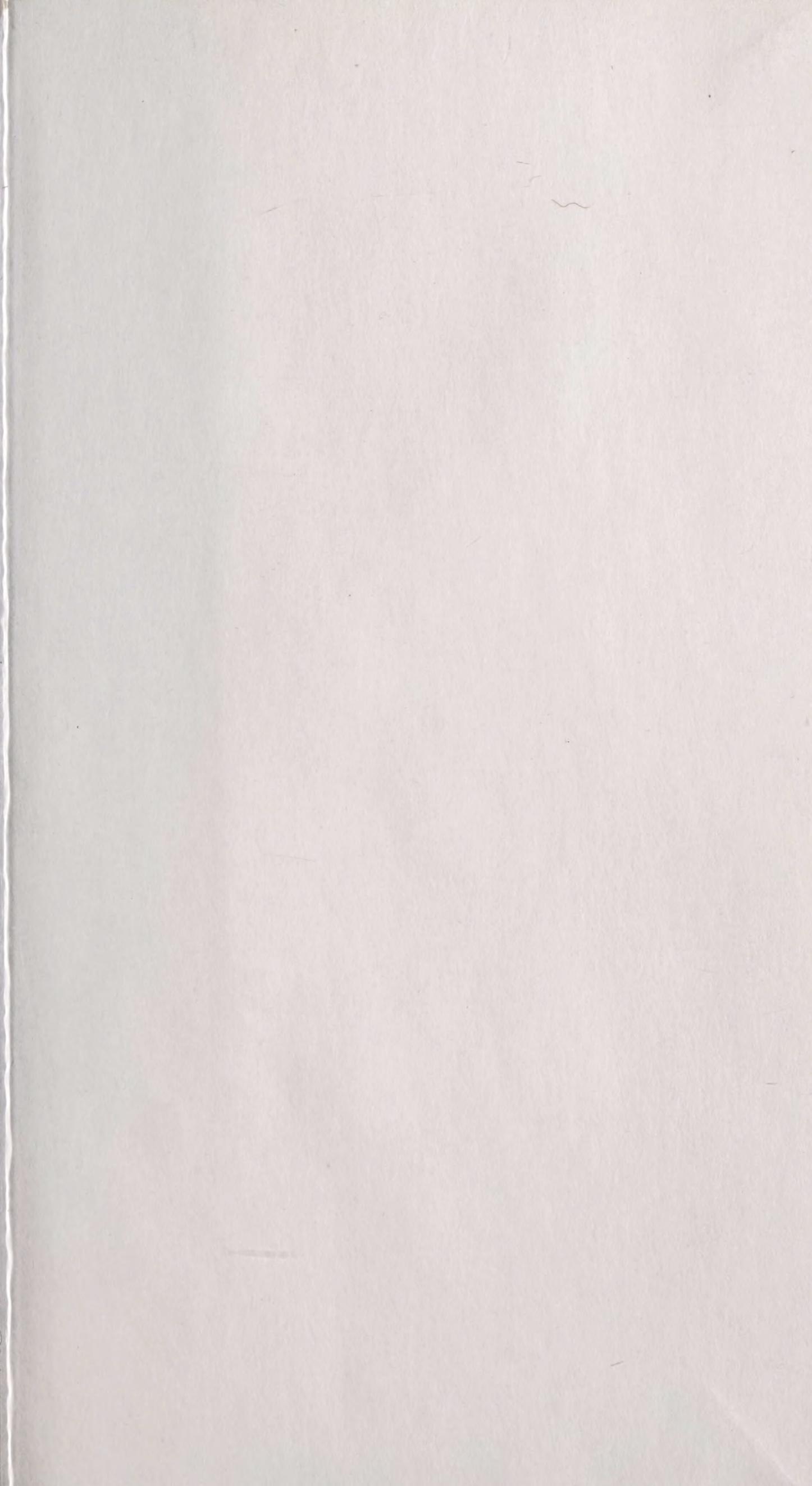
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